REVELATIONS AND PRAYERS OF

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ST BRIDGET OF SWEDEN

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REVELATIONS & PRAYERS *of* ST BRIDGET OF SWEDEN

BEING THE "SERMO ANGELICUS," OR ANGELIC DISCOURSE CONCERNING THE EXCELLENCE *of the* VIRGIN MARY, REVEALED TO THE SAINT, WITH CERTAIN PRAYERS

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN BY DOM ERNEST GRAF, O.S.B., MONK OF BUCKFAST ABBEY

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Cum opus cui titulus "SERMO ANGELICUS a Revdo P. D. Ernesto Graf, O.S.B., Monacho Buckfastriensi, in linguam anglicam versum, Censor a Nobis deputatus examinaverit; nihilque contra fidem et mores in ipso deprehenderit, dignumque typis judicaverit; Nos, quantum ad nostram potestatem pertinet, opus ipsum imprimendi et evulgandi licentiam concedimus, si iis ad quos pertinet ita videbitur.

Ad cujus rei fidem, etc.

D. BENEDICTUS GARIADOR,
O.S.B., AB. GEN.

DATUM SUBLACI EX ASCETERIO S. SPECUS,
Die 14 *Octobris*, 1927.

NIHIL OBSTAT:
FR. INNOCENTIUS APAP, S.T.M., O.P.,
Censor deputatus.

IMPRIMATUR:
EDM. CAN. SURMONT,
Vicarius generalis.

WESTMONASTERII,
Die 12ª *Januarii*, 1928.

First published 1928

Made and Printed in Great Britain

PREFACE

ST BRIDGET is one of the most remarkable figures of the latter half of the Middle Ages and, in the religious sphere, perhaps the most interesting personality of Northern Europe. Born in the second or third year of the fourteenth century, she died at Rome seventy years later. She had scarcely reached her thirteenth year when her father, Birger Persson, married her to Ulf Gudmarson, himself barely eighteen years of age. Their union was blessed with eight children. After the death of her husband, in 1344, Bridget gave herself exclusively to the pursuit of the spiritual life. From her tenderest years the supernatural had always been very near to her, and numerous and remarkable were the mystical favours she experienced. Some of these were described by her to her confessor and to others. The Latin text of what we know as the *Revelations of St Bridget* is from the pen of Master Mathias and that of Peter, the prior of Alvastra.[1]

In 1349 Bridget journeyed to Rome and there she spent the remainder of her life, with the exception of the time taken up by various pilgrimages. It was during the Saint's prolonged sojourn in the Eternal City that she

[1] St Bridget had no small part in an event of supreme importance for the Church—viz., the return of the Pope from Avignon. The brilliant rôle played by St Catherine of Siena should not make us overlook Bridget's share in bringing about the event of October 16, 1367, when Urban V entered Rome.

received the angelic message of which we here give an English rendering. The *Sermo Angelicus* forms the lessons of the night Office of the Sisters of the Order of St Saviour founded by St Bridget. The *Sermo*—so at least it seems to the present writer—is the most perfect piece of writing to be met with in the large folio volume of Bridget's *Revelations*. Time was when these *Revelations* enjoyed a vast amount of popularity, yet to this day no critical edition of them has been published, nor is there, as far as we know, a complete translation of the work in any European tongue.

The reader of the following pages will soon perceive that the *Sermo Angelicus* adds nothing to the knowledge of the mysteries which it describes. The Angel's discourse is but a vivid presentment of facts which the Saint already knew from the Scriptures and the authentic teaching of the Catholic Church. This is a characteristic and unvarying feature of all private revelations, the objective truth of which must always be gauged by their conformity with what we know by faith and the dogmatic magisterium of the Church, and their value lies in that they strengthen faith and arouse greater love and esteem for the deposit of the Faith. When reading private revelations we should be careful to take into account the period in which the seer lived and his or her mental outlook, for all these things have a great deal to do with the account the favoured soul is able to give of the heavenly manifestations granted to her.

This translation of the *Sermo Angelicus* was undertaken, in the first instance, for the benefit of the Sisters of the venerable community of our Lady of Syon, South Brent, the only community of religious women in England that has preserved its unbroken continuity from

its foundation by Henry V to this day. For this reason the blessing before each lesson and the responsory that follows it have likewise been translated. The *Sermo Angelicus*, however, is calculated to make a strong appeal to a much wider public, since it is a literary product of a country whose contribution to religious literature is none too well known.

It remains but to plead for a small meed of indulgence for the translator whose task was not an easy one, since, as has been remarked, there exists no critical edition of the works of the Saint, and the Latin text which we possess is a rather crude rendering of Bridget's native speech. In rendering the " Prayers " of St Bridget, the translator has used his own discretion in omitting several passages which, whilst they may have helped the piety of a ruder and simpler age, are emphatically not to our modern taste.

Buckfast Abbey,
September, 1927.

THE REVELATIONS AND PRAYERS OF ST BRIDGET OF SWEDEN

SERMO ANGELICUS

REVEALED TO ST BRIDGET DURING HER SOJOURN AT ROME

PROLOGUE TO THE ANGELIC DISCOURSE CONCERNING THE EXCELLENCE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

AT the time when the Blessed Bridget, princess of Nericia, in the kingdom of Sweden, lived for several years at Rome, in the house of a certain Cardinal, which is contiguous to the church of St Lawrence *in Damaso*,[1] it so happened that she did not as yet know what lessons should be read by the nuns of the monastery, which at the command of Christ she had founded in Sweden, the rule whereof he had himself dictated, to the honour of the Blessed Virgin his Mother. Now when the Blessed Bridget, in her uncertainty, betook herself to prayer, Christ all at once appeared to her, saying: "I shall send to thee one of my Angels who will make known to thee the lessons which must be read at Matins by the Sisters of thy monastery, to the honour of the Virgin my Mother. He will dictate the readings; do thou, therefore, write them down as he shall tell thee."

[1] Cardinal Hugh de Beaufort, brother of Clement VI.

The Blessed Bridget occupied a room whereof one window faced towards the high altar, from which she was able daily to behold the Body of Christ. In this room, having prepared paper and pen, every day she made ready to write, after she had read her Hours and sundry other prayers: in this way she awaited the coming of the Angel. As soon as the Angel appeared he would place himself by her side, standing erect and in a most dignified attitude, always keeping his face reverently turned towards the altar whereon the Body of Christ was reserved. Thus standing the Angel dictated distinctly and in order, in the mother-tongue of the Blessed Bridget, the said readings—that is, the lessons which follow hereafter—which are to be read by the Sisters of the said monastery, and which treat of the surpassing excellence to which the Blessed Virgin Mary was predestined from all eternity. These lessons she wrote down daily with very great fidelity, as they fell from the lips of the Angel. Daily also, with all humility, she showed to her spiritual father what had been written that day.

Now it also happened that upon some days the Angel did not come to dictate anything. Upon such days, when asked by her spiritual father about the day's writing she would make this humble answer: "Father, to-day I have not written anything: long did I wait for the Angel to come and dictate, so that I might write, but he came not."

In such wise was the Angelic Discourse concerning the excellency of the Blessed Virgin Mary dictated by an Angel and taken down in writing. Nay, the Angel made the very divisions into several lessons, which are to be read by the Sisters at Matins week by week, throughout the course of the year. And after the Angel

had completed his dictation, he said to the Bride: "Behold I have now cut the cloth to make a tunic for the Mother of God, the Queen of heaven; do thou now sew it together as best thou canst."

Wherefore, O most blessed Sisters of the Order of St Saviour, who profess a rule which the Saviour and Creator of all things has deigned to give to you with his own lips and which the world has known through the gentle and humble ministry of his Bride, prepare ye now to receive with great reverence and devotion this sacred discourse which, at the bidding of God, an Angel of the Lord dictated to your Mother St Bridget. Open your ears to hear these sublime, new, and hitherto unheard-of praises of the most Blessed Virgin Mary. Meditate with a humble mind the excellence unto which she has been predestined from eternity, so that, having pondered it by laborious consideration, you may come to relish its sweetness in the delights of contemplation. Hereafter raise your hands and hearts to God with all fervour of affection, in order to render most humble and devout thanks to him who has bestowed so singular a benefit upon you. May all this be granted unto you by her most blessed Son, the King of Angels, who, with her, liveth and reigneth eternally, world without end. Amen.

The beginning of the Angelic Discourse concerning the excellence of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which an Angel, at God's bidding, dictated to the Blessed Bridget and which she, by the same command, devoutly set down in writing to the end that it may be read in sections at Matins, on the ferias of the week, throughout the course of the year, as follows hereafter.

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SUNDAY

[*In the three lessons which now follow the Angel shows how God has loved the blessed and glorious Virgin Mary his Mother from all eternity and above all creatures, before anything was made.*]

THE FIRST LESSON

The Blessing

May the Virgin most acceptable to the Trinity protect us by her most gracious intercession. Amen.

THE Word of which John the Evangelist speaks in his Gospel was eternally with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God. For there are three Persons, and in them is one perfect Godhead, inasmuch as these three Persons have been equal in all things from eternity. For unto them all there was but one will, one wisdom, one power, one beauty, one virtue, one charity, one joy. For it were impossible for this Word to be God if he could be severed from the Father and the Holy Ghost. The Latin word *ita*, by which we express an affirmation and which contains three letters, may here be used by way of illustration. If any one of these three letters were taken away from the others, they could not then have the same effect as before, for they would not make the same word: even thus must we think of three Persons in one Godhead. For if any one of them were separable from the others, as not being equal to them, or as wanting in anything that another has, then would it be made manifest that the Godhead is not in him, inasmuch as the Divinity is indivisible.

It is likewise unlawful to believe that the Word—that is, the Son of God—was parted from the Father and the Holy Ghost when he took a human nature. For even as a word that we speak, though it be thought in the heart and uttered with the mouth, can yet not be touched or seen unless it be written or impressed upon some material thing, even so would it have been impossible for this Word—that is, the Son of God—to be touched or seen, for the salvation of mankind, unless he had been united to human flesh. Also, just as a word that is seen written in a book may be thought in the heart and spoken with the mouth, in the same manner it may not be doubted that the Son of God, who became visible in the flesh which he assumed, always remained with the Father and the Holy Ghost. Therefore the Three Persons are verily inseparable, unchangeable, eternally coequal in all things, one God.

In this Godhead all things were eternally foreknown, and with all reverence they stood before it, in all their fairness, to its joy and glory. Afterwards, at the time appointed by God, his wisdom gave them existence, making them out of nothing. For God was not constrained to make anything by any kind of necessity, or for lack of any joy or advantage, for it was impossible that he should suffer the want of anything in himself. Wherefore his most ardent love alone prompted him to create that thus many might share eternally with him his own unspeakable joy. Wherefore he afterwards made in most fair wise all those things which he purposed to make, in the same form and in the same manner in which they had been eternally present to his sight in most fair wise, ere they were made.

For the four elements that enter into the composition

of this as yet uncreated object, that is fire, air, water and earth, even though they had not yet been made, were yet present to God's eternal vision in such wise that in this wonderful creature the air would be so soft that it would never breathe against the Holy Ghost. The earth in this future object of God's creative power was to be so good and so fruitful that nothing would grow in it that could not minister to man's manifold needs. The water was to be so calm that no matter whence the boisterous winds blew, it could never be lashed into a storm. The fire was to be so high that its flame and its heat would soar up even to the very abode of God himself.

O Mary, most pure Virgin and most fruitful Mother, thou art this very thing. For such didst thou stand from all eternity in the sight of God ere thou wast made, and afterwards of the aforesaid pure and bright elements didst thou receive the matter of thy blessed body. Indeed such wert thou before God, before thy making, as thou didst deserve to be made thereafter; hence from all eternity thou gavest more joy to God than all other creatures that were to be called into existence. For God the Father rejoiced in the fruitful works which thou wast to perform by his help; the Son rejoiced in the constancy of thy virtue, and the Holy Ghost in thy meek obedience. Yet the joy of the Father was the joy of the Son and the Holy Ghost; the joy of the Son was that of the Father and the Holy Ghost, and the joy of the Holy Ghost was that of the Father and the Son. Wherefore even as they took a common delight in thee, so did they love thee with a common charity.

RESPONSORY

To the Sovereign Trinity and simple Deity belong equal glory, co-eternal Majesty, to the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost: ✠ who subjecteth the whole world to his laws.

℣. God Three and One grant us his grace to whom thou, O Mary, hast been sovereignly pleasing from eternity.

THE SECOND LESSON

THE BLESSING

Succour us, O Mother of Christ, who didst bring joy into this sorrowful world. Amen.

THOU also, O Mary, worthiest among all creatures, wast eternally before God, ere he made thee, as the ark was before Noe, after he had been informed of the making thereof, and ere he had accomplished the construction thereof in the manner in which he had been bidden. For Noe knew, what time it pleased God to let him know it, what his ark should be like. God knew before all time what his ark should be like, that is, thy glorious body. Noe rejoiced in his ark ere it was built; and God himself rejoiced exceedingly in thee, O Virgin, ere he made thee. Noe rejoiced in that his ark was to be so strongly put together that no stress of storm could break it asunder; God rejoiced in that thy body should be made so virtuous and strong that it could never be bent to any sin by the violence of any malice that might ever be found in hell. Noe rejoiced in that his ark was to be so pitched within and without that no bilge-water could ever filter through; God rejoiced in that he knew that by his own goodness, thy will would be made so perfect, that thou wouldst deserve to be anointed, within and without, by the unction of the Holy Ghost, and that

no entrance would ever be open in thy heart to the desire of any of the things that were to be created in this world. For the desire in a man of the things of this world is as displeasing to God as the bilge-water in his ark was disgusting to Noe. Noe rejoiced in the breadth and spaciousness of his ark; God rejoiced in thy most ample and merciful pity, by which thou wouldst one day love all men most perfectly and hate no creature unreasonably; but most especially in that thy most gentle bounty was to be so spread out that the infinite God, whose greatness cannot be encompassed by any creature, would vouchsafe to rest and dwell in thy blessed womb. Noe rejoiced in that his ark was to be made sufficiently bright; God rejoiced in that thy virginity was to be kept so pure until thy death, that no stain of sin would obscure it. Noe rejoiced in that he should have in his ark all that was necessary unto his body; God rejoiced in that he should take his whole body of thy body only, without any admixture of defect. God rejoiced even more in thee, O most chaste among Virgins, than did Noe in his ark, for Noe knew beforehand that he should come out of the ark with the same body with which he should go in. God knew beforehand that he should enter into the ark of thy most chaste body without body and that he should come out of it with a body fashioned out of thy most pure flesh and blood. Noe knew that when he should come out of his ark he should leave it empty, never again to return into it; God knew before all time that when he should be born of thee in his manhood, thou, O Virgin and most glorious Mother, shouldst remain most splendidly adorned with all the gifts of the Holy Ghost. And though in his birth, his body should be parted from thy body, he yet knew full

well beforehand that thou shouldst nevertheless abide with him inseparably for evermore.

Responsory

O Mary, most worthy chariot in which the King of glory has deigned to visit those that languish in poverty: ✠ by thee precious stones also are for ever carried up from our valley unto the mountain of God, for the restoration of the heavenly Jerusalem.

℣. Do thou, therefore, pour into our hearts a true love for him who came to us through thee.

THE THIRD LESSON

The Blessing

May she who was made his dwelling-place render God merciful unto us.

The Patriarch Abraham loved his son Isaac so soon as God had promised him that a son should be born unto him—that is, many years ere he was conceived. With far greater charity God Almighty himself loved thee, O most sweet Virgin Mary, ere anything was created, because he foreknew from eternity that thou shouldst be born unto his greatest joy.

The Patriarch did not in the least know beforehand how the great love which he had towards God would become manifest through the son that was promised unto him. But God knew full well from the beginning that the exceeding charity which he had towards mankind would be made evident to all through thee. Abraham knew before that his son would be conceived with shame and that he would be born of a woman joined to him according to the flesh. But God foreknew that he would be conceived in thee, O Virgin most chaste,

without man's co-operation, with honour, and that he would be born of thee most honestly, thy virginity being kept intact. Abraham understood that the body of his son, after he had begotten him, would differ in being and substance from his own body. But God the Father foreknew that that blessed flesh which his most sweet Son was resolved to take from thee, O most illustrious Mother, would never be severed from his Majesty, inasmuch as the Son is in the Father, and the Father in the Son, inseparable in essence and one God. Abraham understood that the flesh begotten of his flesh would decay and crumble into dust even as his own flesh. But God knew that thy most pure flesh would no more return to dust or suffer corruption, than his own most sacred flesh, which was to be formed of thy virginal body. Abraham built a dwelling-place for his son ere he was conceived, to the intent that he should dwell therein when he was born. As for thee, O peerless Virgin, the house in which thou shouldst abide was set ready from eternity, to wit, God Almighty himself.

Oh! the ineffable dwelling that not only enclosed thee from without, warding off all perils from thee, but even abode within thee, thus enabling thee to reach the perfection of all virtues!

Furthermore, previously to his son's conception Abraham prepared three things for him—to wit, wheat, wine and oil—to be his food after his birth. These things differed from each other in appearance, nature, and taste. But for thee, O amiable Virgin, was prepared from eternity, for thine everlasting refection, God himself, in three Persons, which differ not from each other in their divine nature. And this same God was prepared to be the everlasting food of poor mankind,

by thee, O Mary, who feedest the poor. For by those three things which the Patriarch prepared for his son may be understood the three divine Persons—that is, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. For even as the fatness of the oil cannot burn until a wick be added thereunto, so did the Father's most burning love not shine openly in the world until his Son took to himself of thee, O singularly chosen Spouse of God, a human body which is understood by the wick. And as wheat cannot be made bread until it has been prepared with sundry instruments, even so the Son of God, who is the refection of the Angels, did not appear in the form of bread for the refection of man until, in thy womb, his body received its shape and its members. Also, as wine cannot be carried about unless vessels be first made ready, in like manner the grace of the Holy Ghost, which is signified by the wine, could not be given to man for his eternal life, until such time as the body of thy most dear Son, which is understood by these vessels, was made ready by his Passion and death. For from this life-giving vessel the sweetness of every grace is most lavishly poured out upon Angels and men.

Responsory

Mary, abode of the sovereign Trinity that containeth both thee and all creation, temple bedecked with the flowers of every virtue, most prudent dispenser, enfold those who are in misery with thy protection: ℣ and refresh the hungry by thy gentle providence.

℟. Look with pity upon the perils that threaten the nations, hear the groans of captives, behold the affliction of orphans, so that all may experience the help of thy providence.

MONDAY

[*In the three lessons which follow hereafter the Angel shows how, after the fall of Lucifer, the Angels knew that the Blessed Virgin would be created and how they joyed in her future creation. Also how, after the world had been made, the Virgin herself seemed to be present in the sight of God and the Angels.*]

THE FIRST LESSON

THE BLESSING

May the Queen of Angels lead us to the fellowship of the heavenly citizens. Amen.

NOW God knowing that he possessed within himself all that was sufficient unto his eternal bliss was none the less moved, by the sheer ardour of his love, to create, so that others might be partners of his unspeakable bliss. Wherefore he called into being an innumerable multitude of Angels and endowed them with free-will, thus enabling them to exert their powers according as they please, to the end that even as he himself, being constrained by no necessity but out of the fervour of sheer love had made them for their own everlasting blessedness, they also, not compulsorily but out of their own free choice, should make unto their Creator a ceaseless return of love for love, and revere him because of the unfailing comfort they receive from him.

But at the very time when they were made, some of the Angels most wickedly misusing the most acceptable gift of free-will, began maliciously to bear envy to their Creator whom, for his immense love, they should have loved supremely. Wherefore, by reason of their malice, they at once deservedly fell from eternal happiness into

endless misery; but the rest of the Angels, by reason of their charity, remained in the glory prepared for them, loving God most ardently because of his love and beholding in him all beauty, all power, and all virtue. From their contemplation of God the Angels likewise understood that he alone is without beginning and without end, and that they themselves were made by him and that whatever goodness they had they owed to his goodness and power. They also became aware that the glorious vision of him so endowed them with his own wisdom, that they were able clearly to foresee, according as God permitted, all things that were to come to pass. Among these things that which most touched them inwardly was the knowledge that God, of his goodness and charity and for his glory and the comfort of the Angelic hosts, would fill again those heavenly mansions from which their pride and envy had miserably driven the rebellious Angels. They also beheld in that blessed mirror—to wit, God their Creator, a certain august throne, so nigh unto God himself that it seemed impossible that any other seat should ever be nearer, though they knew that the one for whom this throne had been prepared from eternity was not as yet created. Also, without any doubt, the sight of the brightness of God inflamed them all, in an instant, with such divine charity, that each of them loved everyone of his fellow Angels even as himself. Nevertheless, they loved God supremely and above all things. That being also which should one day sit on the throne that was nearest unto God, though it was not as yet made, they loved more than themselves, inasmuch as they perceived that God loved it supremely and joyed in it exceedingly.

O Virgin Mary, comfort of all creatures, thou art

that being for whom the Angels burned with such love from the beginning of their existence, that though they joyed unspeakably in the sweetness and splendour which was theirs, because of their nearness to and contemplation of God, they yet joyed even more in the knowledge that there was reserved for thee a greater love and sweetness than they themselves enjoyed. They also beheld upon that seat a crown of such fairness and worth that the majesty of none, save that of God alone, could surpass it. Wherefore, though they knew that God would verily derive much honour and joy from his having made them, they yet saw that even greater honour and joy would accrue to him in that thou wast destined to wear so lofty a crown. Hence the Angels joyed more in that God intended one day to create thee than in that they themselves had been made by him. And thus thou, O holiest of Virgins, wast a joy to the Angels so soon as they were created, even as thou wast God's eternal and sovereign delight. Thus verily did God with the Angels, and the Angels with God take their inmost delight in thee, O Virgin, of all creatures the worthiest, even ere thou wert created.

RESPONSORY

O holy Lord, all the Angels praise thee in the highest, saying: ✠ Praise and honour are due to thee, Lord.

℣. Cherubim and Seraphim, and the whole heavenly host proclaim the praises of the Lord, because of thy glory, O Virgin, saying:

Praise and honour, etc.

THE SECOND LESSON

The Blessing

May the Virgin singularly chosen to be the Mother of God show us the straight way to heaven. Amen.

Now God purposing to make the world, together with all the creatures which it contains, spoke thus: *Fiat*, let it be made. And all at once that was perfectly made which he had intended to create. When, therefore, the world and all creatures, save man alone, were perfectly made and were reverently present, in all their fairness, in the sight of God, there was also present before God, with all fairness, a lesser world not yet made, from which there would one day accrue more glory to God, joy to the Angels, and profit to every man who should wish to make use of the goodness thereof, than from the whole of this vast universe.

O my sweet Lady, Virgin Mary, amiable to all, profitable to all, full meetly art thou understood by this lesser world. From the Scriptures also we gather that it pleased God to separate light from darkness in this greater world. But, verily, the separation of light from darkness that was to be made in thee, after thy creation, pleased him far more, to wit, when the ignorance which belongs to tender infancy, which is likened unto darkness, was to depart wholly from thee and the knowledge of God, which is likened unto light, together with the will and understanding to live after his will, was to abide in thee most perfectly together with most ardent charity. Rightly, therefore, is the time of tender infancy likened unto darkness, inasmuch as the while it lasts God is not known, nor is reason able to direct what should be done. But thou, O Virgin, exempt from all sin, didst pass through that tender age in utmost innocence.

Furthermore, even as God made two lights, together with the stars, which are necessary to this world, the one to rule the day, and the other to rule the night, so did he foresee that two lights, far brighter than these, would be made in thee. The first light was thy godly obedience which was to shine more brightly than the sun before the Angels of heaven and before just men of this world to whom God is verily an everlasting day. The second light was thy most constant faith by which many, as by the light of the moon, were to be brought to the knowledge of truth, who in the night time, that is, from the hour when in his human nature the Creator was to suffer for his creature, until that of his Resurrection, miserably wandered in the gloom of despair and unbelief. The thoughts also of thy heart appeared like unto the stars, in that, from the time when thou didst know God, thou didst remain so fervent in divine charity, until thy death, that all thy thoughts appeared more bright in the sight of God and his Angels than the stars do in the sight of men. The lofty flights also and the sweet-sounding songs of the birds of divers kinds betokened all the words of thy lips which were to rise up with much sweetness from thy earthly body even to the ears of him who is seated upon the throne of Majesty, to the sovereign joy of the Angels. Furthermore thou wast like unto all the earth in that, just as all the things of this great world that have an earthly body were to be nourished with the fruits of the earth, so were they all to receive not only nourishment, but life itself, from thy Fruit. Thy works also could rightly be likened to trees bearing flower and fruit, for thou wast to do them with such charity that they were to give greater delight to God and his Angels than the beauty of all flowers and the

sweetness of all fruits. And this all the more as we must believe, without any manner of doubt, that God saw in thee, even ere he made thee, more virtues than in every kind of herbs, flowers, trees, fruits, stones, gems or metals that might be found in the whole expanse of the earth. Hence it is not to be marvelled at that God took greater delight in thee, thou lesser world, that wert yet to be made, than in this greater world. For though the world was made before thee it was yet to perish, with all that it contained. But thou, according to the eternal decree of God, shalt never be parted from his most sweet love. For by naught did that greater world deserve or could it deserve that it should abide for ever. But thou, O blessed Mary, most full of grace, didst after thy creation most worthily deserve all things that God has vouchsafed to do unto thee, by the help of his grace, by reason of thy perfection in all virtues.

RESPONSORY

Blessed is the land whose flowers do not fade, whose fruit is the life of all living things: ✠ which giveth nourishment to all flesh.

℣. Verily that land is the Virgin Mother, the flowers are her works, the fruit is her Son.

THE THIRD LESSON

THE BLESSING

May the Queen arrayed with the crown of all virtues be ever ready to defend us! Amen.

GOD is the author of all virtues and virtue itself insomuch that it is impossible for a thing that has been made out of nothing to be adorned with any virtue except by his help. Now when in the beginning God had made

the world and all creatures, lastly, by a fresh display of his power, he also made man, endowing him with free-will, that by it he might firmly stand in righteousness and earn his reward and not fall into evil, by which he would bring woe upon himself. For even as among men their works are made but little account of, who will not work until they have been compelled by the punishment of stocks or fetters, but their works are deemed worthy of esteem and high reward who do what they have to do, not under constraint, but spontaneously and with sincere charity; in like manner, if God had not given free-will to Angels and men, they would seem, in a manner, compelled to do what they are doing and their works would then deserve but a small reward. Therefore it pleased the power, which is God, to grant them freedom to do what they would, at the same time giving them clearly to understand what reward godly obedience would deserve and what punishments would follow upon proud disobedience.

God verily displayed much power when he made man out of the dust of the earth, to the end that, by charity and humility, he might deserve to dwell in those heavenly mansions from which those Angels were miserably cast forth who by their pride and envy set themselves at variance with the will of God. For these hated those virtues which would have won for them a noble crown. Let no one doubt that just as a king is honoured and worshipped because of his royal crown, so does each virtue procure honour for him who practises it, not only among men, but it arrays him most nobly, as with a resplendant crown, before God and his Angels; hence every virtue may fitly be called a shining crown. Wherefore truly infinite is the number of crowns whose

splendour invests the Majesty of God with glory, for his virtues and powers incomparably surpass in number, greatness and worth all things that were, are now or ever shall be. For he never wrought anything but virtues. Yet three virtues, like three most bright crowns, adorn him with an especial glory. That virtue, or power, by which he made the Angels, was his first crown, of which some of them, envying the glory of God, wretchedly deprived themselves. The virtue by which he created man was to him as another crown, of which man also was deprived at the moment when his folly prompted him to listen to the suggestions of his enemy. Yet was the virtue of God or the glory of his power not lessened by the fall of the Angels or that of man, for, though they themselves, made inglorious by their wickedness, fell from glory, inasmuch as they would not give glory to God who had made them for his and their glory, the wondrous wisdom of God caused the wickedness of these to result in an even greater triumph of his power. But that power by which he made thee for his eternal glory, O lovable Virgin, glorified him as a third crown, and by it the Angels knew that the breaking of the other crowns would be made good. Wherefore, O Lady, the hope of our salvation, rightly mayest thou be called the crown of God's honour, for as by thee he asserted his sovereign virtue, so through thee there resulted for him a glory which excels that of all other creatures. For it was made clearly known to the Angels when, though thou wert not as yet made, thou wast present in God's sight, that by thy most holy humility thou wouldst overcome the devil who had ruined himself by his pride and beguiled man by his malice. Wherefore even

though the Angels beheld the most wretched fall of man, the joy they felt in the vision of God did not allow them to grieve, the more so that they knew full well what great things God would vouchsafe to do with thy lowliness, after he should have created thee.

RESPONSORY

O Virgin most beloved of Christ, who didst practise every virtue, help those who are in misery: ✠ O Lady, succour those who cry to thee unceasingly.

℣. Because we are weighed down by the load of our sins we have recourse to thee, O most Holy One.

TUESDAY

[*In the three lessons which follow hereafter the Angel speaks of the penance of Adam. He describes the consolation which our first parent experienced in his foreknowledge of the future creation of the Blessed Virgin and of her great humility and dignity. Also how the Patriarch Abraham, together with Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets were comforted by their knowledge of the future nativity of the Mother of God.*]

THE FIRST LESSON

The Blessing

May the meek Virgin defend us from the wicked enemy. Amen.

HOLY Scripture bears witness that whilst Adam dwelt in the Paradise of delights, he broke the commandment of God; but it does not say that after his fall into misery he was ever rebellious against God's will. It may be truly seen that Adam loved God with his whole heart, inasmuch as, after his son was slain by his brother, he refrained from carnal union with his wife, though later on, at the bidding of God, he once more obediently resumed marital relations with her. And more grievously did he repent of having offended his Maker than that he had brought such grievous woes upon himself. By this it may be known that even as it was just that the anger of God should descend upon him when his pride caused him to offend his God in the midst of his felicity, so also much comfort should be granted to him when he found himself in such great misery, by reason of the true repentance and humility which caused him to grieve at having provoked to anger his most kind Creator. However, Adam could

experience no greater consolation than to be made certain that God would vouchsafe to be born of his race to redeem by humility and charity those souls which he, beguiled by the envy of the devil, and by his own pride, had robbed of eternal life. But since it seems impossible to all wise men—and it is so in reality—that God, whom no nativity becometh except such as is most glorious, should take to himself a human body through carnal concupiscence, as other children are begotten, much more did it seem so to Adam who had himself been made without carnal indulgence. Hence Adam understood that it pleased not the Maker of all things to make a human body for himself after the manner in which his own body or that of Eve had been formed. Adam, therefore, believed that God would take human flesh from a person who, in body, would be like Eve, but the perfect beauty of whose virtues would surpass that of those born of man and woman, and that of her he would be most gloriously born, God and man, his Mother's virginity being preserved intact. Wherefore it must be held without doubt that just as Adam, when he felt that God was in a manner reconciled to him, experienced great grief from the words which Eve had learned in her discourse with the devil; in like manner when he saw himself plunged in sorrow and wretchedness he found great joy and comfort in the words with which thou, O Mary the hope of all, wouldst answer the Angel. Adam also grieved that the body of Eve, which had been taken from his own body, had lured and dragged him down into the everlasting death of hell; but he joyed in that he knew that of thy body, O most kind Virgin, that venerable Body would be born, which, by its own power, would bring back to heavenly life both

himself and his followers. Adam likewise grieved because Eve his beloved companion, in the greatness of her pride, disobeyed her Maker, but he joyed when he foresaw how thou, O Mary, his most beloved daughter, wouldst obey God in all things with sovereign humility. Adam grieved because Eve, in the pride of her heart, had in a certain manner wished to be equal to God, for which reason she fell into great evil in the sight of God and the Angels; but he joyed because that word of thine by which thou wast humbly to profess thyself God's handmaid, shone bright in their foreknowledge, to thy great honour. Adam also grieved because the word of Eve had provoked God to wrath and to the condemnation of herself and her posterity; but he joyed in that thy word would incline the charity of God to pour out much comfort upon thee and all those who had been condemned because of the word of Eve; for the word of Eve miserably deprived her and her husband of glory and shut the gates of heaven against her and her offspring. But thy blessed word, O Mother of wisdom, brought thee much joy and opened the gates of heaven to all who are willing to enter through them. Wherefore even as the Angels rejoiced in heaven because they knew, even before the creation of the world, that thou shouldst be born, O Mother of God, so did the foreknowledge of thy birth procure much joy and gladness unto Adam.

RESPONSORY

Mother Eve, by yielding to the enemy, deprived herself and her husband of glory, exchanging life for death; but her blessed daughter, by obeying God, defeated the enemy, restored glory, drove away death: ℣ and brought back life.

℣. Praise and glory be unto God who to a frail mother gave a daughter who became the Mother of her Creator.

THE SECOND LESSON

The Blessing

Help us, O amiable Virgin, amid the cruel perils of this world. Amen.

Now when Adam was cast forth from Paradise he experienced both the justice and the mercy of God in his regard, and he feared God because of his justice and because of his mercy he loved him from his heart all the days of his life. And well was the world ordered so long as his posterity acted in like manner; but when men ceased to heed the justice and mercy of God many forgot their Maker. They believed only the things that pleased them and spent their days amid the shameful abominations of carnal indulgence, so that God who greatly abhors these things, destroyed all the inhabitants of the earth by the waters of the flood, except those whom his foresight preserved by means of Noe's Ark for the restoration of the world. But when mankind had multiplied once more they fell away, at the instigation of the evil one, from the worship of the true God and plunged headlong into idolatry, making a law unto themselves that was wholly at variance with God's will. Then God, being moved thereunto by his most fatherly pity, visited Abraham, a man zealous for the true faith. With him and his offspring God made a covenant. Moreover, he fulfilled Abraham's yearning by giving him a son, Isaac, of whose race he promised that his own Son, Christ, should be born. Wherefore it appears very credible indeed that God also revealed to Abraham that a daughter of his lineage, to wit, the spotless Virgin, would bring forth the Son of God. We must likewise believe that Abraham joyed more in that daughter to

come than in his son, and that he loved her with an even greater love than that with which he loved Isaac.

It should be understood that Abraham, the friend of God, did not acquire temporal goods out of pride or covetousness, nor did he desire a son for his personal comfort. For he was like a good gardener who, whilst faithfully serving his master, planted a small branch of a vine on his land, knowing that innumerable vines might be planted with the off-shoot of that branch and that a chosen vineyard might be made therewith. Wherefore he gathered dung so that the vines being made fat thereby they should not fade away, but should be made to yield fruit in plenty.

The gardener rejoiced, for he had a foreknowledge that amongst his humble plants there would grow a certain tree so lofty and so delectable that it would give exceeding delight to his Lord to walk in his vineyard because of the fairness of that tree; and that the same Lord would taste the sweetness of its fruits and enjoy pleasant repose beneath its restful shadow. Now by this gardener is understood Abraham; the small branch of the vine is Isaac, his son, and the many vines to be planted from its offshoots are his progeny. By the dung worldly riches are to be understood, which Abraham, the friend of God, desired but for the sustenance of God's people. By that most fair tree is betokened the Virgin Mary, and by the Lord, God Almighty, who purposed not to come into that vineyard, that is, into the progeny of Abraham, until that lofty tree should be there, to wit, not until the glorious Virgin Mary, his most dear Mother, should have come to a suitable age. Her most innocent life is likened to that beauty which delights the eye of God, whereas

by the sweetness of the fruits we are to understand her works so supremely pleasing to God; the shadow also of the tree is the virginal womb of her who was overshadowed by the power of the Most High.

Wherefore, knowing that the Maiden who was destined to bring forth God himself would spring from his race, Abraham found more comfort in her alone than in all his other sons and daughters.

Lastly, this faith and holy hope of the birth of the Son of God, which was to be of his own race, Abraham most faithfully left as an inheritance to Isaac his son. This is well proved in that when he sent his servant to get a wife for his son, he made him swear upon his loins, that is, by him that should come out of his loins, in time to come: meaning thereby that the Son of God would be born of his lineage (Gen. xxiv 2, 3). Isaac also, by the blessing which he gave to his son Jacob, is known to have left unto him the same heritage, to wit, the aforesaid faith and hope (Gen. xxviii). And Jacob, blessing his twelve sons one by one, did not omit to give unto his son Juda the comfort of a like inheritance. Hence it is manifest that God so loved his Mother from the beginning that, even as in her he joyed most ere he made anything, so he gave unto his friends much comfort by giving them a knowledge of her birth to come. Thus indeed, as first upon the Angels and afterwards upon the first man, so, later on, great comfort was bestowed upon the Patriarchs, through the glorious Mother of God that was to be born.

Responsory

Understanding that his progeny should equal the number of the stars, Abraham yet derived greater joy from thee and

thy Son, O thou source of grace: ✠ than from all the other sons and daughters that were to spring from his race.

℣. Wherefore let our assembly rejoice and be exceeding glad because of thee and thy blessed offspring, even as our father Abraham rejoiced.

THE THIRD LESSON

The Blessing

May the Mother of true charity loosen the bonds of our wickedness! Amen.

God is the lover of charity, and charity itself. He displayed great charity when by his power he delivered the people of Israel from the thraldom of Egypt, bestowing upon them a most fruitful land in which they should happily dwell in all freedom. But the wily enemy was jealous of their happiness and by his cunning devices led them into sin on innumerable occasions. And they, making no effort to withstand the machinations of the devil, were miserably led to worship idols, setting at nought the law of Moses and forgetting and foolishly neglecting that covenant which God had made with Abraham. Afterwards the merciful God, beholding how his friends served him devoutly, with right faith, true charity, and the keeping of the Law, visited them in his kindness, and with the intent that they themselves might become yet more fervent in the service of God, he raised Prophets amongst them, in order that by their ministry even the enemies of God, if they but would, might come back to his love and to the true faith. And even as a torrent which should rush down from the top of a mountain into a deep valley, would also carry down into the valley all that should be found in its water once it had begun to flow; so did the Holy Ghost

vouchsafe to descend into the hearts of the Prophets and again himself proceed from their lips, together with those words with which he inspired them for the correction of this erring world.

Now among all the things which flowed into their hearts with greatest delight, together with this sweet torrent—to wit, the Holy Ghost—and again most sweetly fell from their lips, was this, that God the Maker of all things would vouchsafe to be born of a pure Maiden, and that by his atonement and satisfaction, he would redeem for eternal bliss those souls which, by the sin of Adam, Satan had cast into everlasting misery. Under the influence of this stream—to wit, the Holy Ghost—they also knew that God the Father would be so well disposed towards man's salvation, that he would not spare his only begotten Son; that the Son would be so obedient to the Father that he would not refuse to take a mortal body; finally, that the Holy Ghost would most gladly be sent, together with the Son, though he was never parted from the Father. Another thing also was most evident to the Prophets, to wit, that the Sun of Justice, the Son of God, would not come into the world until a star were risen out of Israel, the heat whereof would vie with that of the sun. By this star is understood the Virgin that was to become the Mother of God. By its heat is understood her most fervent charity, by which she would so approach unto God, and God unto her, that he would fulfil all his will with her. And verily even as the Prophets received comfort, in words and works, from this uncreated, yet all-creating Sun, so God gave them great consolation in their tribulations by this foreknowledge, by which they knew that Mary was to be created. For the Prophets sorrowed

greatly at the sight of the sons of Israel forsaking the Law of Moses through their pride and carnal lust, for they saw that the anger of God would fall upon them when they strayed far from his love, but they joyed by reason of their foreknowledge that the Giver and Master of the Law would be appeased by the lowliness and purity of thy life, O Mary, thou resplendent Star, and that he would take back into his good graces those who had provoked him to anger and miserably incurred his indignation. The Prophets likewise sorrowed, by reason that the temple was laid waste wherein sacrifices ought to be offered to God; but they joyed in foreseeing that the temple of thy body would be formed which was destined to receive God himself with all joy. They also sorrowed by reason that the walls and gates of Jerusalem having been destroyed, the enemies of God had entered the city, destroying it materially the while Satan did so spiritually; but they joyed in thee, O Mary, most glorious Gate, for they knew beforehand that God himself, as a most valiant giant, would put on armour in thee, by which he would overcome the devil and all other enemies. Thus were the Prophets, even as the Patriarchs, exceedingly comforted in thee, O most glorious Mother.

RESPONSORY

Oh! the ineffably rich Maiden dwelling in a poor city: ✠ who, when the Son of the sovereign King was sent to her, received him in a most pleasing abode, entertained him with the delights for which he longed, and armed him with the weapons of power.

℣. When he returned in triumph into his own country he made her its Queen, for her everlasting honour.

WEDNESDAY

[*In the three lessons which follow hereafter the Angel speaks of the Conception of the Virgin and of her Nativity and how God loved her whilst she was as yet in the womb of her mother.*]

THE FIRST LESSON

The Blessing

May the darkness of our ignorance be enlightened by the Virgin, the Mother of wisdom. Amen.

ERE the Law was given to Moses men were for a long time in ignorance as to how they should conduct themselves in this life. Hence those who were fervent in the love of God ordained their actions and manners in such wise as they thought would best please God. But the others, who had no love for God, set aside the fear of him and lived as they pleased.

Wherefore God of his goodness mercifully condescending to their ignorance established a Law by his servant Moses by which they were to be governed according to the will of God. This Law taught men how God and the neighbour should be loved, and how wedlock betwixt man and woman should be kept according to the Law of God and the law of honesty, so that of such wedlock they should be born whom God would call his own people. And indeed to such an extent did God love such wedlock that he decreed to take therefrom the most glorious Mother of his humanity.

If an eagle were to rise high in the air to examine many woods, if he were to behold from afar a tree so firmly rooted that the blast of the storm would not be able to tear it up, and if its stem were so high and so even that no man could climb it—if, moreover, it stood in a place

where nothing could possibly fall upon it from above, after carefully considering such a tree, the eagle might well decide to build therein a nest in which to seek repose. Even so God, who is likened to this eagle, to whose sight all things present and to come are clear and manifest, the while he beheld all the righteous and honest wedlocks that were to exist from the making of the first man unto the last day, he yet foresaw none that, in godly charity and honesty, would be like unto the wedlock between Joachim and Anne. Hence it pleased him that the body of his most glorious Mother, which is understood by the nest, in which he was to vouchsafe to rest with all comfort, should be begotten of this holy wedlock. Right meetly are godly wedlocks likened unto fair trees, the root whereof is such an union of two hearts that they are wedded together for the sole motive that from thence honour and glory might accrue to God. The will also of the wedded couple is rightly likened unto fruitful branches, when in all their works they so keep the fear of God before them that they love each other in all honour and for the sole purpose of raising children destined to glorify God, according as the divine precept commands. Such wedlocks are so noble that the fiend cannot approach them either by force or by cunning, for these persons seek their joy in the honour and glory of God, and the only tribulation that afflicts them is to see God offended and dishonoured. Then also do they seem to stand in a safe place when the abundance of worldly goods and wealth cannot draw them to the love thereof, or unto pride.

Wherefore, since God foresaw that such would be the wedlock of Joachim and Anne, he ordained that his abode—to wit, the body of his Mother—should be the

fruit thereof. O Anne, mother most venerable, how precious a treasure didst thou bear in thy womb when Mary rested therein, that was to become the Mother of God! Surely it must be believed without any doubt that, as soon as Mary's body was formed in the womb of holy Anne, God loved it more than all those that were to be born throughout the world. Wherefore of a truth, the venerable Anne may be called the treasury of God, for in her womb lay hid the treasure that is most dear to him. Oh! how near was the heart of God at all times to this treasure! Oh! with what gentleness and eagerness did he fix the eyes of his Majesty upon this treasure, he who afterwards spoke thus in his Gospel: *Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also* (Matt. vi. 21). Wherefore we must believe that the Angels joyed not a little in this treasure when they saw that their Maker whom they loved more than themselves had such great love for it. Wherefore it were right and meet that that day were held by all men in great reverence, on which was formed in the womb of Anne, the body of the Mother of God, towards whom God himself and his Angels felt such exceeding charity.[1]

RESPONSORY

Blessed Mother Anne, casket of the eternal King wherein was hid a treasure most dear to him, with which he endowed his only begotten Son, enriched those that were in want: ✠ and set at liberty those who were in miserable bondage.

℣. Rejoice, O venerable mother, because of thy most venerable daughter who, whilst remaining a Virgin, begot him who created all things.

[1] The feast of the Immaculate Conception, though already observed in many places, was not yet universally kept in the days of St Bridget. However, our Lady revealed to our holy Mother the mystery of her sinless conception.

THE SECOND LESSON

The Blessing

O Mary, Star of the sea, most mercifully come to our assistance!

Wherefore, when in due time the blessed body of Mary was formed within the womb of her mother, the King of glory increased yet further the value of his treasure by pouring into it a living soul. And as a bee that flies about flowery fields busily searches all herbs from which honey may be gathered, because by her instinct she is able to discern where the fairest flowers bloom; and if she finds that the most beautiful of all flowers has not yet burst from the bud, she nevertheless awaits its unfolding with eagerness and delight, in the hope of freely enjoying the sweetness thereof—even so the God of heaven who most clearly sees all things with the eyes of his Majesty, when he beheld Mary as yet hidden in the secret of her mother's womb, whom he knew in his eternal foreknowledge no man in all the world would ever equal in virtue, he awaited her birth with all consolation and joy, for by the sweetness of that Maiden's charity his overflowing goodness was to be made manifest. Oh! how brightly did the hues of dawn shine in Anne's womb when the infusion of the soul quickened the body of Mary, whose birth both Angels and men so eagerly longed to behold.

Now it is to be noted that the men who dwell in those regions where the sun enlightens them with its beams in the night-time as well as in the day-time, desire not the dayspring because of its light, since the splendour of the sun is so much brighter than the break of day, but solely because they perceive that when the day-

THE THIRD LESSON

The Blessing

May the glorious Nativity of the Mother of Christ bring unto us everlasting gladness. Amen.

Now even as there was from all eternity but one Godhead in the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, so was there never in them any diversity of will. Therefore, as if three flames should come out of one great fire, so out of the goodness of God's will three flames of charity proceeded equally, for the accomplishment of a common work. For the flame of charity which came from the Father burned most brightly before the Angels, when they knew that it was his will most generously to give his beloved Son in order to deliver his slave from thraldom. The flame of charity which proceeds from the Son did not remain hidden when, at the bidding of the Father, he emptied himself by taking the form of a slave. The flame of charity that proceeds from the Holy Ghost did not appear less ardent when he declared his readiness to show by open works the will of the Father, of the Son, and of himself.

But although the most fervent charity of the divine will shone throughout all heaven, its brightness giving unspeakable consolation to the Angels, yet according to the eternal ordinance of God, redemption could not come to mankind from this charity until Mary should be born, in whom would be kindled so fervent a fire of charity that, as the fragrant smoke thereof should rise on high, the fire that was in God would pour itself into it and thereby penetrate into this world which was waxing cold.

Lastly, after her birth this Virgin was like unto a new

lamp, but one that is not yet lighted; yet it must be lighted in such wise that even as the charity of God, which is likened to three flames, shone in the heavens, so this choice lamp, to wit, Mary, should shine in this dark world as with three other flames of charity.

The first flame of Mary shone full bright before God when she resolved securely to preserve her spotless virginity until death, to the honour of God. This most glorious virginity God the Father loved so much that he vouchsafed to send thereunto his beloved Son, together with his own Godhead and that of the Son and the Holy Ghost. The second flame of Mary's charity appeared in that in all things she lowered herself constantly by an ineffable humility, which assuredly so pleased the blessed Son of God that he vouchsafed to take of her most lowly body that venerable body which one day would meetly be raised above all things in heaven and in earth, unto all eternity. The third flame was her praiseworthy obedience in all things, which so drew the Holy Ghost towards her that by him she was endowed with the fulness of all graces. And even though this blessed new lamp was not lighted with these flames of charity immediately upon her birth, for hers also was a small body and tender intellect, like that of other infants; yet God joyed more in her, though she had as yet no personal merits, than in all the good deeds of all men that were begotten before her in all the world. For even as a good harper would love an untuned harp which he knew would one day sound most sweetly, so the Maker of all things sovereignly loved the body and soul of Mary when she was as yet an infant, by reason that he foreknew that her words and works would please him above all harmonies. It is also a credible thing

that just as Mary's Son had perfect understanding, as soon as he became Man in her womb, so also Mary, after her birth, received wit and understanding in a tenderer age than other children. Wherefore, since God and the Angels joyed in heaven because of her glorious nativity, let men on earth also celebrate her birth with joy, giving praise and glory from their innermost hearts for her to the Maker of all things, who singled her out from among all the things he made, and ordained beforehand that she should be born among sinners who brought forth most holily the deliverer of sinners.

RESPONSORY

The Mother of the sun of Justice, the sovereign King: ✠ Mary is born, the resplendent Star of the sea.

℣. Rejoice, ye faithful, on beholding the light of God.

THURSDAY

THE FIRST LESSON

The Blessing

May the august Virgin of virgins intercede for us with the Lord. Amen.

IT is meet that we liken the blessed body of Mary unto a most pure vessel, her soul to a most bright lamp and her brain to a fountain first welling upwards and afterwards flowing down into a deep valley. For when the Virgin reached that age when she could understand that the God of truth was in heaven, that he had made all things, and man especially, for his everlasting worship, and that he would be the most just judge of all, knowledge and understanding ran up from the brain of the Virgin to the height of heaven, like water rising from a well-spring, only to flow down once more into the valley, to wit, into her most lowly body. For even as the Church sings that the Son of God came forth from the Father and once more returned to him, though neither was at any time separated from the other, so the wit and understanding of the Virgin, often rising into the heights of heaven, firmly held on to God by faith and after tasting his most sweet charity turned to itself again. This charity she kept most firmly, together with reasonable hope and the fear of God, for love so inflamed her soul that it burned like a most fierce fire. For this cause also the wit and understanding of the Virgin so subjected her body to the soul, thus fitting it to carry out the will

of God, that henceforth her senses were perfectly obedient to her reason.

And as if a lily were transplanted and were to fix itself anew in the earth by three roots by which the soil itself would gain greater consistency, and if it were to produce three beautiful flowers, for the delight of the beholders, even so when divine charity was planted in this glorious earth, to wit, our blessed Maiden, it fixed itself in her body as by three powerful roots which strengthened the very body of the Virgin. As for her soul, charity decked it with three ornaments, as with three most fair flowers, for the delight of God and of the Angels who behold her.

The first bodily virtue of the Virgin was that of discreet abstinence, by which she made such temperate use of meat and drink that no dulness or heaviness, arising from superfluous indulgence, ever hampered her in the service of God, nor was she ever incapacitated from doing her duty by any weakness caused by excessive abstinence. The second virtue was her strength in watchings by which she tempered her body in such wise that—by reason of the shortness of her sleep—she was never dulled by any heaviness at such times when it behoved her to be awake, nor—because of too long a repose—did she ever shorten in the least the time fixed for her awaking. The third virtue of the Virgin's body was its perfect health which rendered her perfectly indifferent both in regard to labour and distress of the body as well as its transitory well-being; hence she was neither depressed by physical adversity nor elated by material felicity.

Furthermore this was the first ornament with which divine charity arrayed the Virgin as to her soul, to wit,

that she preferred in her mind those rewards which God has in store for his friends to the beauty of all other things; whence worldly riches were as contemptible in her eyes as the common dust. The second ornament with which her soul was arrayed was that she perfectly understood in her mind how utterly unlike worldly honour is to spiritual glory: hence it was as repugnant to her to hear of worldly glory as it is repugnant to men to live in a poisoned atmosphere which would quickly quench their life. And without doubt that which made her soul resplendent as with a third ornament was that in her heart she deemed that most sweet which was pleasing to God, and those things more bitter than gall which were hateful and contrary to God. Wherefore the will of the Virgin drew her soul so effectually to the desire of true sweetness that it was not seemly that she should taste any spiritual bitterness after this life. For all these ornaments caused the soul of the Virgin to be decked with a beauty surpassing that of all things created, so that it pleased the Creator to fulfil all his promises through her instrumentality. Mary was so strengthened by charity that she failed not in any good work and even in the smallest point the enemy never prevailed over her. It is verily to be believed without any hesitation that even as her soul was all fair before God and his Angels, so her body also was most pleasing in the eyes of all those that beheld her. And as God and the Angels in heaven joyed in the fairness of her soul, so also the most gracious beauty of her body was a source of profit and comfort on earth to all those who wished to behold her. For those who were devout, seeing with what fervour she served God, were themselves made more eager in their worship of God and even in those most

prone to sin, the ardour of evil inclinations was quenched, so long as they witnessed the seemliness of her words and her bearing.

RESPONSORY

O holy and spotless virginity, I know not with what praises to extol thee: ✠ for him whom the heavens could not contain thou didst bear in thy womb.

℣. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb.

THE SECOND LESSON

THE BLESSING

May the Virgin that was saluted by an Angel vouchsafe to blot out our sins. Amen.

No tongue can tell how wisely the wit and understanding of the glorious Virgin laid hold of God in that same instant when she first knew him, all the more as the human mind is too weak to understand how completely the blessed will of the same Virgin subjected itself to the service of God; for whatever she saw to be pleasing to God, that it gave her joy to carry out. For the Virgin understood that not because of her merits had God made her soul and body and given her freedom of will whereby she might humbly carry out the Lord's commandments or even resist them. Therefore the most meek will of the Virgin determined to serve God with all love, as long as she lived, by reason of the benefits that she had received up till then, even though he should never give her anything hereafter. But when her mind was able to grasp that the Creator of all things would vouchsafe to buy back the souls that he had made and that, as a reward for such labour, he desired naught else but these same souls, and that every man had freedom of will to

appease God by good works, or to provoke him to wrath by evil deeds—then, indeed, the Virgin began to govern her body amid the storms of this life as a wise shipmaster governs his ship. For even as a shipmaster who dreads the dangers that threaten his ship when it is battered by the waves and whose memory ever dwells on the rocks against which ships are frequently dashed to pieces, makes sure of the ropes and other tackle; and as his eyes are for ever on the lookout for the harbour where he hopes to rest after his toil, and as he strives his utmost that the goods which his ship carries may come to their true owner, for his profit—for he loves him dearly—even thus this most prudent Virgin, after she came to know the commandments of God, began at once to direct the course of her life according as they prompted her. Often she dreaded the neighbourhood of her kinsfolk, fearing lest their prosperity or adversity, which may be likened to the storms of this world, should hinder her, or their words or works should make her remiss in the service of God.

All the things that were forbidden by the Law of God she carefully committed to memory, avoiding them with all diligence, lest they should be the occasion of the ruin of her soul. In fine this praiseworthy disposition caused the Virgin so to check and daunt her senses that she never moved her tongue in idle speech; never did she raise her modest eyes to look at anything unnecessarily; her ears were only attentive to what concerned the glory of God; she never stretched forth either hand or finger but for the true advantage of herself or her neighbour, nor would she allow her feet to move even one step before weighing what would be the good thereof. Furthermore, she was willing gladly to bear

all the tribulations of this world, so long as she should reach a harbour of security—that is, the bosom of God the Father. For she longed without ceasing that her soul might yield joy and honour to God who created her, inasmuch as she loved him beyond all else. Since, then, the will of the Virgin never failed in any good, God, from whom all good things do proceed, raised her to the highest summit of perfection and made her resplendent with the beauty of every virtue. Who then will marvel that God loved this maiden exceedingly and more than any other, foreknowing, as he did, that, she alone being excepted, none would ever be begotten of men and women whose mind would not at times incline towards mortal or venial sin. Oh! how this ship, to wit, the body of the Virgin, drew nigh unto the most desirable haven—that is, to the abode of God the Father—when Gabriel came to her and said: "*Hail, full of grace!*" Oh! with what purity, without man's co-operation, did the Father commit his Son to the Virgin, when she replied to the Angel: "*Be it done unto me according to thy word*," for in that moment was the Godhead united to a human nature in the Virgin's womb, and he became man and the Son of the Virgin who is true God and the Son of God the Father.

RESPONSORY

Behold a wondrous thing, the Mother of the Lord conceived, a Virgin that knew not man: ✠ Bearing a noble burden Mary standeth before us, glad in the knowledge that she is a mother yet not a wife.

℣. In her chaste womb she conceived him who is the fairest of the children of men, and she is blessed for ever because she gave us him who is both God and Man.

THE THIRD LESSON

The Blessing

May the Virgin Mary bless us together with her merciful Son. Amen.

Oh ! the most fair union and most acceptable in every way ! For the body of the Virgin was a dwelling-place for the Son of God in the world whose abode in heaven is the Blessed Trinity, though by his power he is everywhere. The Virgin was full of the Holy Ghost in soul and body, and the Holy Ghost was in the Father as well as in the Son who had become man, the while the Son of God had his abode not only in the Virgin's womb, in this world, but also in the Father and the Holy Ghost, in heaven. The Father also, conjointly with the Holy Ghost, had his dwelling in this world, in his Son made man, although the Son alone, true God that he is, took unto himself human flesh, and though his Godhead was hidden from human eyes, yet before the Angels, in his everlasting abode he was always equally manifest. Wherefore let all those who have the true faith joy together in that ineffable knitting-together which took place in the Virgin, in which knitting-together the Son of God assumed a human body from her flesh and blood and the Godhead was united to humanity and true humanity to the Godhead. For in this most gracious union, the Son suffered no loss of his divinity nor the Mother any loss of her virginal integrity. Let them, therefore, be struck with shame and fear, who will not believe that the omnipotence of the Creator can do such things, or who think that his goodness, though it had the power, would not do such things for the salvation of his creatures. But if men do believe that the power

and goodness of God have done these things, why is he not perfectly loved by those who do not doubt that he has done such great things in their behalf? Let then your hearts take heed and understand how that temporal lord were worthy of supreme love who, whilst in the enjoyment of the highest honours and of immense wealth, on hearing that a friend of his had been subjected to insults and injuries, would take upon himself his friend's troubles in order to enable him to regain his former honourable position. And he would deserve the same love if he saw his friend in destitution and were to strip himself in order to restore him to affluence; or if, seeing his friend being led out to die a miserable death from which he could not escape, unless someone were ready to die in his stead, he were to undergo death, to the end that his friend might live in happiness. In these three things the highest love is displayed. But to the end that none should be able to claim that any man in this world has shown greater love than the Creator who is in heaven, the Majesty of God has stooped to earth when he came down from heaven into the Virgin's womb, pouring himself into this virginal abode and forming unto himself a most noble human body from the flesh and blood of this one chosen Maiden.

Wherefore this singularly chosen Mother is appropriately likened to the bush which Moses saw all on fire, which yet remained unconsumed; for he who abode so long in the bush until he made Moses believe and carry out what he told him, to whom also, when he asked his name, he said: "*I am Who am*, this is my name for ever"; the same abode in his mother's womb for as long a time as other children must remain there before their birth. And as the Son of God took entire posses-

sion of the Virgin's body in his conception, so did he come forth from her, in his nativity, as the perfume yielded by the rose, in all the glory of his Godhead and Manhood, the virginal glory of the Mother remaining untouched.

Wherefore, since God and the Angels, and later on the first man, and after him the Patriarchs and Prophets together with the rest of the innumerable friends of God, joyed in that this bush, to wit, the body of Mary, was so influenced by charity that the Son of God vouchsafed meekly to enter into it, and so long to abide therein and so gloriously to proceed therefrom; it is just that men now living should rejoice with them with all their heart. For as the Son of God, who is true and immortal God together with the Father and the Holy Ghost, entered into this bush, taking in it a mortal body, for their sakes; so ought they in all haste to fly to the Virgin, that at her request life everlasting may be restored to them that are mortal, who by their crimes have incurred eternal death. And as God abode in the Virgin lest his body should differ from that of other infants by some defect in his age or his members, and in order that he might overpower the devil whose guile had made all men subject to his cruel tyranny, so let men beseech her with all humility that she may make them abide under her protection lest they fall into the snares of the evil one. Likewise, as God came forth from the said Maiden into the world, in order to unlock the gate of heaven, so let them humbly beseech her that she vouchsafe to be present unto them with her assistance at their going out of this wicked world, and procure unto them an entrance into the everlasting realm of her blessed Son.

Responsory

Blessed art thou, holy Virgin Mary, and most worthy of all praise: ✠ For out of thee hath arisen the Sun of righteousness, Christ our Lord.

℣. Pray for the people, plead for the clergy, intercede for the devout female sex; may all experience thy help who celebrate thy memory.

FRIDAY

THE FIRST LESSON

The Blessing

May the Virgin who begot him reconcile us to Christ who redeemed us. Amen.

WE read how the glorious Virgin was afraid when the Angel addressed her, not that she had then any fear for her body, her only dread being lest the crafty enemy of the human race should have come to hurt her soul. From this we may gather that when she reached such age that her wit and understanding could know the will of God, forthwith, even as she began reasonably to love God, so she also began reasonably to fear him. Meetly, therefore, may this Virgin be called a rose in full bloom, for as the rose is wont to grow among thorns, so did the worshipful Virgin grow among tribulations in this world. Now when the rose bush spreads abroad in its growth, its thorns also become stronger and sharper; even so the more that most choice rose, Mary, advanced in age, the more sharply was she pricked by the thorns of increasing tribulations. So when her youthful years were over, the very fear of God was her first tribulation, for she was not only filled with great fear in her readiness to flee from sin; she likewise laboured under no small fear when she weighed in her mind how she might perfectly accomplish good deeds. And though she most carefully ordained her thoughts, words and works to the honour of God, she yet dreaded lest some defect be found in them. Wherefore let wretched sinners, who boldly and willingly

render themselves guilty of divers iniquities, consider what great torments and what miseries they heap upon their souls, when they behold how this glorious Virgin, who was free from all sin, performed with fear those works of hers which were so pleasing to God.

Furthermore, understanding from the Scriptures that God would take flesh and that in this flesh he would undergo divers torments, Mary suffered no small pain in her heart by reason of the love she felt for God, although she knew not as yet that she herself would be his Mother. But when she reached the age when the Son of God became her Son and she felt that he had assumed in her womb the body in which he was to accomplish the sayings of the Prophets, then that most sweet rose seemed to grow and spread abroad yet more, in all its fairness; but the thorns of tribulation which pricked her cruelly also grew daily in strength and sharpness. For as the conception of the Son of God was for her a great and ineffable joy, so the thought of his future most cruel Passion smote her heart with bitter grief. The Virgin joyed in that through his lowliness her Son would lead back his friends to the glory of the kingdom of heaven, whom the first man by his pride had caused to incur the pains of hell; but she sorrowed in that she foreknew that just as man had sinned in paradise in all his members, through evil concupiscence, so her Son was to make satisfaction in this world for man's transgression by the most bitter death of his own body. The Virgin joyed in that she had conceived her Son without sin or carnal delight, even as she brought him forth without pain; but she was sore afflicted because she foreknew that this most sweet Son would be born for a most shameful death and that in greatest

mental anguish she herself would witness his Passion. The Virgin also joyed because she foreknew that he would rise from the dead, and that, because of his Passion, he would be raised to the highest honour for all eternity; yet she sorrowed because she knew that ere he could come to that glory he would have to undergo shameful outrages and cruel torments. Yet it is to be believed without any doubt that even as the rose is seen to remain firmly in its place though the thorns around wax stronger and sharper, so this blessed rose, Mary, bore so stout a heart that however sharply the thorns of tribulation might have pricked her they could not change her will in any way, for she remained always most ready to suffer and to do the will of God.

Wherefore she is most justly compared to a beautiful rose, indeed to the rose of Jericho, for as the rose of that country is said to excel all other flowers by its beauty, so Mary, by the beauty of her virtuous life, surpassed all those who ever lived in this world, with the sole exception of her blessed Son. Wherefore even as God and the Angels joyed in heaven by reason of her unshakable constancy, even so she gave great joy to those who dwelt on earth when they considered her great patience in tribulation and her admirable moderation in the hour of consolation.

RESPONSORY

Even as the neighbourhood of the thorns cannot diminish the fragrance of the rose in full bloom, so the immensity of sorrow, O Mother of Christ, could not lessen the strength of thy constancy: ✠ For thou wast fragrant with the sweet odour of every virtue.

℣. O thou our hope, be prepared to come to the assistance of thy suppliants, lest prosperity extol us or adversity cast us down.

THE SECOND LESSON

The Blessing

May he who saved us at the cost of his blood defend us by the intercession of the Virgin his Mother ! Amen.

Among the things which the Prophets foretold of the Son of God, they announced what cruel death he would have to suffer in his most innocent body, in this world, that thus men might enjoy eternal life in his company in heaven. They prophesied and wrote how the Son of God, for the sake of the liberation of the human race, would be bound and scourged, led to the cross, contumeliously treated and crucified. Wherefore, since we believe that they well knew for what cause the immortal God would take unto himself a mortal body and undergo such manifold torments in that same body, Christian faith may not doubt that the Virgin, our Lady—whom God ordained before all ages to be his Mother—knew this even more clearly. Nor would it be right to think that the Virgin was ignorant of the reason which prompted God to clothe himself with human flesh within her womb. We must even believe without hesitation that by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost she grasped more perfectly whatever the oracles of the Prophets betokened than the Prophets themselves understood, though they were the mouthpiece of the Holy Ghost. Hence we must hold for certain that when the Virgin, after giving birth to the Son of God, first handled him with her hands, the thought suddenly rushed into her mind in what manner he was one day to fulfil the writings of the Prophets. When she wrapped him in swaddling clothes she pondered in her heart how his whole body would be rent by sharp

scourges, insomuch that he would appear even like a leper. And when the Virgin gently gathered together in bands the hands and feet of her little Son, she was mindful how cruelly they were to be pierced, on the cross, by iron nails. Also, when she gazed upon the face of this Son of hers, who is fair above all the children of men, she reflected how foully the lips of wicked men would defile it by spitting upon it. The said Mother likewise often revolved in her mind with what heavy blows the cheeks of her Son would be smitten and with what outrages and insults his blessed ears would be filled. Now she considered how his eyes would be blinded by his own blood, now how vinegar mixed with gall would be poured into his mouth; at another time she called to mind how his arms would be bound with ropes, and how his sinews and all his veins and joints would be mercilessly stretched on the cross and how his heart would shrink together in death; in fine how the whole of his glorious body would be tortured, within and without, with all bitterness and anguish, even unto death. She also knew that after the passing of his spirit, upon the cross, a most sharp spear would pierce the side of her Son and cleave the very centre of his heart.

Wherefore even as she was of all mothers the most blessed when she beheld the Son of God born of her, whom she verily knew to be true God and man, mortal in his manhood but eternally immortal in his Godhead, so was she also of all mothers the most afflicted, by reason of her foreknowledge of his most bitter Passion. For in such wise was her keenest joy always mixed with bitterest grief, as if someone were to speak thus to a woman in child-birth: "Thou hast brought forth a

son alive and whole in all his members, but the pain which thou hast experienced in his birth shall last until thy death." The mother, on hearing this, would indeed joy in the life and health of her offspring, but would sorrow in her own suffering and death. Assuredly the sadness of such a mother, arising from the remembrance of her pain and of the death of her body, could not be more grievous than the sorrow of the Virgin Mary whenever her mind dwelt upon the future death of her dearly-beloved Son.

The Virgin understood that the oracles of the Prophets had foretold of old that her most sweet Son would have to undergo many and grievous pains. Moreover, Simeon, the just man, announced, not from afar off, as the Prophets did, but in the very face of the Virgin, that a sword should pierce her soul. Here it should be noted that even as the powers of the soul are more keenly sensitive to joy and pain than are those of the body, so the blessed soul of the Virgin, which was to be pierced by that sword, was afflicted with more grievous pain ere her Son entered upon his Passion, than that which the body of any mother might undergo ere she brought forth her child. For that sword of anguish came nearer and nearer to the heart of the Virgin with every hour that brought her beloved Son nearer to the time of his Passion. Wherefore we must believe, without any doubt, that the most merciful and most innocent Son of God, of his filial compassion towards his Mother, tempered her sorrows with frequent consolations, else she could not have endured them all her life until the time came when her Son suffered death.

RESPONSORY

O Mother of everlasting joy, may thy most innocent soul be eternally blessed, which was pierced by the sword. Gladly didst thou receive that sword; ✠ lest our frail souls be pierced by the sword of everlasting death.

℣. O thou who art full of love, grant us perfectly to love him who, when we were miserably dead, bought for us a blessed life with his own Heart's blood.

THE THIRD LESSON

THE BLESSING

May the Passion of the Virgin's Son commend us into the hands of the heavenly Father. Amen.

FINALLY what time the Virgin's Son declared, "You shall seek me and you shall not find me," that word of sorrow grievously pricked her heart. Furthermore, when he was betrayed by his own disciple and made a prisoner by the enemies of truth and justice—for such was his pleasure—the sword of sorrow pierced through the very heart of the Virgin and, passing cruelly through her soul, caused most grievous pain to all the members of her body. For as often was that bitter sword turned in the soul of the Virgin as sufferings and outrages were heaped upon her most beloved Son. She beheld her Son, struck by the palms of wicked men, scourged without pity and condemned to a most cruel death by the princes of the Jews. And when the whole people shouted, "Crucify the traitor," she saw him being led forth, with his wrists bound, to the place where he was to suffer. And as he bore his cross, in utmost weariness, some went before him, dragging him bound after

them; others walked with him, urging him on with blows and driving that most gentle Lamb as if he were a most cruel wild beast. But he, even as Isaias had foretold, was so patient in his anguish that he did not open his mouth, like a sheep without voice when it is led to the slaughter, or a lamb that remains dumb when it is shorn. And even as he displayed the utmost patience in his own person, so did his Mother bear all her pains most meekly, and as a lamb accompanies its mother whithersoever she be led, even so did the Virgin Mother follow her Son as he was led forth to the place of torture.

When the Mother saw her Son crowned, in derision, with a crown of thorns, his face red with blood, his cheeks burning from the heavy buffeting he had endured, she wailed in her most grievous sorrow, and her own cheeks paled by reason of her excessive grief. When the blood of her Son flowed from his whole body, in his scourging, a flood of tears likewise ran from the eyes of the Virgin. Furthermore, when the Mother beheld her Son cruelly stretched upon the cross, all strength began to forsake her limbs. But when she heard the sound of hammers, as the hands and feet of her Son were pierced with iron nails, all feeling left her and the greatness of her pain cast her down upon the earth as one dead. When the Jews gave him gall and vinegar to drink, the anguish of her heart so dried the tongue and palate of the Virgin, that she could not move her blessed lips in speech. Afterwards, on hearing the sorrowful voice of her Son exclaiming in the agony of death, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" and seeing how all his limbs waxed stiff and how, bowing his head, he gave up the ghost, the bitterness of

her grief so oppressed the Virgin's heart that no joint of her body seemed to retain its flexibility.

Hence it becomes evident that God wrought then no small miracle in that the Virgin, pierced by so many and so grievous sorrows, did not give up her spirit as she beheld her beloved Son hanging between two thieves, naked and bruised, living and dead, pierced with a lance, the object of the mockery of all and abandoned by almost all those who had known him, many of whom strayed widely from the true faith. Wherefore, even as her Son endured a more bitter death than ever was experienced by any man, so his Mother bore and suffered most bitter sorrow in her soul.

Holy Scripture relates that when the wife of Phinees learned that the ark of God had fallen into the hands of the enemy, she expired forthwith, by reason of her great sorrow. But the grief of this woman cannot be compared to the sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary when she beheld the body of her Son, of which the ark was but a figure, held fast to the cross by cruel nails. For Mary loved her Son, true God and man, with far greater love than one born of man and woman ever felt either for himself or for another. If, then, it would seem marvellous that her lesser grief should have caused the death of the wife of Phinees, whereas Mary was able to survive in the midst of far greater sorrows, who could think otherwise but that she remained alive by a special grace of Almighty God which enabled her to withstand such grievous shocks ?

Finally, in the very act of dying, the Son of God opened heaven and by his might delivered his friends who were imprisoned in hell. The blessed Virgin, coming back to life as it were, was then the only one

that wholly kept the true faith, and many who had miserably erred were by her corrected and brought back to the faith. Now when her Son was dead, he was taken down from the cross, wrapt in winding sheets and buried even as other dead bodies. Then all withdrew, and but a few believed that he would rise again. Then also the stings of sorrow fled from the Mother's heart, and in their place she felt the comfort of sweetness and joy, for she knew that her Son's tribulations were now wholly ended, and that he would rise again, upon the third day, with his Godhead and manhood, unto everlasting glory, and that henceforth he would not, and could not, experience the least pain.

Responsory

The cheeks of the loving Mother paled as she beheld the Son of her virginity dyed with his own blood; and when she saw the piercing of his hands and feet her bodily strength began to fail her: ℣ and on hearing the cry of this great Son of hers, in the hour of his death agony, her grief caused her to fall to the ground like one deprived of life.

℣. Oh! the immense charity which impelled God, the King of the universe, and the most pure Virgin, to endure so much for the salvation of a servant who had incurred condemnation!

SATURDAY

[*In the three lessons which follow hereafter the Angel shows how the Blessed Virgin remained unshaken in the true faith when all others doubted the resurrection of Christ : also how her life and teaching was profitable to many and how she was taken up into heaven with her soul and body.*]

THE FIRST LESSON

THE BLESSING

May the most merciful Mother of God confirm us in the most holy faith. Amen.

WE read that the Queen of the South came from a far-off land to visit King Solomon, and that when she saw his wisdom no spirit was left in her by reason of her astonishment. But when her strength returned to her she sounded the king's praises and bestowed great gifts upon him. The most excellent Queen, the Virgin Mary, is most properly likened to this Queen, for her soul, having prudently investigated the order and progress of the whole world, from its beginning unto its end, and having diligently considered all things that were therein, she found therein naught that she wished either to have or to hear beside the wisdom which she had learned from God. This wisdom she sought with all eagerness and investigated most carefully, until she most wisely found Wisdom itself, to wit, Christ the Son of God, whose wisdom incomparably surpasses that of Solomon. But when the Virgin saw how wisely he had won back the souls of men by the sufferings of his body upon the cross, and opened the gate of heaven to those

on whom the crafty enemy had brought the death of hell, then was this Virgin nearer unto death than ever was the Queen of the South when she seemed to have no spirit left in her. Furthermore, when the Passion of Christ, her Son, at last came to an end, she took strength again and bestowed upon God gifts most pleasing to him; for by her salutary teaching she offered to him more souls than anyone was ever able to do, since the death of Christ, by all his labours. There is further proof that she did him honour with her words in that, after the death of his body, when many were in all manner of doubts about him, she alone constantly confessed him to be the true Son of God, immortal and everlasting by reason of his Godhead. Upon the third day, when the disciples still doubted his resurrection, and the women looked diligently for his body in the sepulchre, and when the Apostles, by reason of the great anguish and fear of their hearts, shut themselves up together, the Virgin Mother—though the Scriptures do not relate any of her discourses—without doubt testified that the Son of God was risen in the flesh unto everlasting glory, and that henceforth death would no longer have dominion over him. Likewise, although the Scriptures say that Magdalen and the Apostles were the first witnesses of the Resurrection, we must yet believe without doubt that his most glorious Mother knew it even before them and before them beheld him alive and risen from the dead; wherefore, with a joyful heart and with all humility she gave praise to him. And when her blessed Son ascended into his glorious kingdom the Virgin Mary was allowed to remain in this world, for the consolation of the just and the correction of the erring. For she was the mistress of Apostles,

the comforter of Martyrs, the teacher of Confessors, the most bright mirror of Virgins, the consoler of Widows, the most salutary counsellor of those living in wedlock, and the most admirable strengthener of all in the Catholic faith. When the Apostles came unto her she revealed and made clear to them whatever they knew but imperfectly concerning her Son. She animated the Martyrs to a joyful endurance of tribulation for the name of Christ, who had freely undergone so many sufferings for their salvation and for that of many, pointing out how she herself had patiently borne continual anguish of heart during the thirty-three years that preceded the death of her Son. To the Confessors she imparted salutary doctrines, by which, as well as by her example, they learned most perfectly how to order with all discretion the hours which were to be set apart for the praise and glory of God, both by day and by night, and how they ought to measure sleep, food and work, according to the laws of reason and those of the spirit. By her most admirable life virgins were taught to conduct themselves with all seemliness and resolutely to keep until death their maidenly purity; to flee from much talking and all vanities, to ponder well beforehand whatever they undertook, to examine it strictly and to weigh it in a true spiritual balance. In order to comfort the widows the glorious Virgin told them that though her Mother's love would have rejoiced if her most dear Son had had no more will to die in his manhood than in his Godhead, none the less, her Mother's will was wholly conformable to the divine will, choosing rather meekly to bear all manner of tribulation, so that God's will might be accomplished, than to dissent from it in anything for the sake of any personal satisfaction. By

discourses such as these she made the hearts of widows patient in their tribulations and constant amid all bodily trials. Moreover, she counselled them that were united in wedlock to love each other in soul and body, with true and sincere charity, and to have but one will in all that in any way concerns the honour of God, telling them how she herself sincerely put her trust in God and how, for love of him, she never resisted the divine will in anything.

RESPONSORY

Blessed art thou, O Virgin Mary, Mother of God, that didst believe the Lord, for the things that were told unto thee have been accomplished; behold thou art exalted above the choirs of the Angels. ✠ Plead for us with our Lord Jesus Christ.

℣. Hail! Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

THE SECOND LESSON

THE BLESSING

May the Son of the Virgin Mary cleanse us from the stains of sin. Amen.

FORASMUCH as we gather from the text of the Holy Gospel that "with what measure a man shall have meted it shall be measured to him again," it seems utterly impossible for anyone to understand by the light of reason alone with what great honour the glorious Mother of God ought to be worshipped by all the inhabitants of the heavenly city, since, whilst she dwelt upon this earth, her kindliness caused her to procure for so many the good things for which they longed. Whence it is rightly believed that what time it pleased her Son to call her out of this world, all those were ready to do her honour who through her had had a care of their per-

fection. And whereas the Creator of all things fulfilled his good pleasure in the world by means of her co-operation, it also pleased him and all the Angels to bestow upon her the highest glory that heaven could give. Wherefore, after the soul of the Virgin left the body, God marvellously exalted her above all the heavens, giving unto her the whole world for her empire and establishing her for all eternity mistress of the Angels. So obedient were the Angels to this Blessed Virgin that they would rather endure all the pains of hell than act in any way against her behests. God also gave her such power over the evil spirits that as often as they impugn one who lovingly implores the help of the Virgin, at her command they at once flee in terror, willing to have their pain and wretchedness increased rather than experience the Virgin's power. And inasmuch as she was found more humble than all Angels and men, she was exalted above all created things and made the fairest of them all and more like unto God than any of them. Here it is to be noted that just as gold is esteemed above other metals, so are the Angels and the souls of men more excellent than other creatures. Now even as gold cannot be shaped into various works of art except by the virtue of fire, and by fire receives divers forms, according to the will of the goldsmith, in like manner the soul of the most Blessed Virgin could not have been endowed with a beauty excelling that of all other souls, nay, even the beauty of the Angels, unless her most perfect will, which is likened to a clever goldsmith, had so effectually prepared her beforehand in the most ardent fire of the Holy Ghost, that her works appeared most pleasing in the eyes of the Creator of all things. And though gold be shaped into beautiful works of art, yet

the skill of the goldsmith is not clearly seen so long as the object he has wrought is shut up in a dark place—only when it is taken out into the light of the sun does the fairness of the work begin to show itself—in like manner, the most noble works of this glorious Virgin, which arrayed her most precious soul with exquisite beauty, could not be clearly seen so long as that soul was kept enclosed in the hiding-place of her mortal body; only then were they made manifest when it came into the brightness of the true Sun which is God himself.

Then the whole court of heaven honoured the Virgin with sovereign praise because her will so adorned her soul that by her fairness she far surpassed the beauty of all creatures, so that she appeared most like unto the Creator himself. For this glorious soul there was set apart from all eternity a throne of glory nearest to the Trinity itself. For even as God the Father was in the Son, and the Son in the Father, and the Holy Ghost in both, when the Son, after assuming a human nature, rested in his Mother's womb, in his Godhead and Manhood, the unity of the Trinity remaining undivided and the virginity of the Mother being preserved inviolate —even so God appointed to the soul of the Blessed Virgin a mansion nigh unto the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in order that she might share in all the good things that can be communicated by God.

Moreover, the depth of no man's heart is sufficient to conceive the joy that God communicated to the blessed company of heaven, when his most beloved Mother passed out of this wretched world; this can only be clearly known by those who, after ardently longing for their heavenly country, at last behold God himself face to face. The Angels also, the while they greeted

the soul of the Virgin, glorified God, for by the bodily death of Christ their fellowship is made complete, and by the entrance of his Mother into heaven their joy is increased. Adam also and Eve, together with the Patriarchs and Prophets and all the company that was brought out of hell, and the rest of those who entered into bliss after the death of Christ, joyed together at the coming of the said Virgin into heaven, and gave praise and worship to God for bestowing so much honour upon her who had so holily and so gloriously brought forth their Lord and Redeemer. The Apostles also and all the friends of God who had stood around the most holy death-bed of the Virgin, when her most beloved Son took up her glorious soul with him to heaven, did lowly homage to her, bestowing all manner of honour and worship upon her sacred body.

And verily we must believe without hesitation that even as the dead body of the most Blessed Virgin was borne to the sepulchre by the friends of God, so was it reverently taken up to heaven, alive, together with the soul, unto everlasting life, by God her most beloved Son.

RESPONSORY

Who is she that hath come forth like the sun and fair even as Jerusalem? ✠ The daughters of Sion beheld her and called her blessed and the queens praised her.

℣. Who is she that cometh out of the wilderness like a light pillar of smoke perfumed with myrrh and frankincense?

THE THIRD LESSON

The Blessing

May the Queen of Angels lead us into the glory of the Kingdom of Heaven. Amen.

Inasmuch as Truth itself, which is the Son of God and of the Virgin, has counselled all men to render good even for evil, with what great goods will not God himself reward those who do good works? And since he has promised in his Gospel that a hundredfold reward shall be given for every good work, who is able to think with what sublime gifts he must have rewarded and enriched his most honoured Mother, who never committed the least sin and whose works, which were most acceptable to God, are without number? For even as the will of the Virgin's soul conceived every good deed, so her most pure body was a most apt and ever ready instrument for the perfect execution of those same deeds. Wherefore since we verily believe that by a decree of God's justice all human bodies shall rise upon the last day, to be requited together with their souls, according as their works demand—inasmuch as even as the soul of every man was the originator of all his works, the will inspiring them, so the body joined to the soul, co-operated in the execution thereof—even so must we believe without hesitation, that just as the sinless body of the Son of God rose from the dead and now shares in the glory of the Godhead, so the body of his most glorious Mother, which was never stained by sin, was, a few days after its burial, taken up to heaven by the virtue and power of God, together with the most holy soul of the Virgin, and together with it was honoured and glorified. And as the mind of no man living in this

world is able to understand the beauty and splendour of the crown with which it is meet that Christ, the Son of God, should be honoured and worshipped, by reason of the Passion that he underwent; in like manner, no man can imagine the fairness of the crown with which the soul and body of Mary is adorned, by reason of her godly obedience. Moreover, even as all the virtues of the Virgin's soul praised God her Maker, whose most sacred body was afterwards adorned with the beauty of all virtues, even so the works that she did in her body turned to the praise of the Blessed Virgin and most glorious Mother of God, for, whilst she was in this world she neglected none of those virtues for which she knew a reward would be given in heaven to both body and soul. Wherefore it should be noted that as except for the most holy soul of Christ, the soul of his Mother was most worthy of sovereign reward, because of her virtues and merits, inasmuch as she was not wanting in any good deed, so also, except for the body of Christ, the body of his Mother was most worthy to receive, together with the soul, the reward of her merits for a longer time than the bodies of others, for her soul always accomplished the most perfect works and never gave consent to any sin.

Oh, how mightily God showed his justice when he drove Adam out of Paradise, because in his disobedience he ate in the garden of delights of the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge! Oh, how sweetly God manifested his mercy in this world, through the Virgin Mary, who is meetly called the tree of life! Ponder then how swiftly righteousness cast them out into wretchedness who through disobedience partook of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Consider also how sweetly mercy

invites and draws unto glory those who, by godly obedience, desire to be fed with the fruit of the tree of life. Note likewise, dearly beloved, that when the body of this most noble Virgin, which is compared to the tree of life, was as yet growing upon the earth, all the angelic choirs desired no less the Fruit thereof and joyed no less in him that was to be born thereof, than they joyed in the grace they themselves had received, to wit, the knowledge that they would for ever taste the joys of heaven, and above all that God would make a display of his wondrous charity towards mankind whereby their own company would receive an increase. Hence the Angel Gabriel came to the Virgin with eager and glad-some haste, and with great charity greeted her with words most honourable and acceptable. And when the same Virgin, the true Mistress of humility and every other virtue, made most meek reply to the Angelic messenger, he was glad, knowing that thus would be accomplished his own desire and that of all the other Angels. And inasmuch as we know that the blessed body of the Virgin was raised to heaven, together with her soul, a whole-some warning to make haste and ascend to her by true repentance of their sins is given to mortal and sinful men who daily groan under the weight of divers tribula-tions to which they are subject in this vale of tears, and by reason of the certain knowledge that this woeful life must be terminated by the death of their bodies. And if men wish to be refreshed by the fruit of this tree, to wit, Christ himself, let them first strive with all might to bend the small boughs of this tree—that is, to greet his Mother with all charity, even as the Angel did, determined to avoid every sin, and, as is reasonable, ordaining all their words and works to the honour of

God. Then will the Blessed Virgin readily bend down to them, helping them to receive the fruit of the tree of life—that is, the most holy Body of Christ, which is consecrated among you by the hands of men. This Body is life and food to you sinners, in this world, and to the Angels in heaven.[1]

And inasmuch as Christ longs with most burning desire for the souls which he has redeemed with his own Blood, that so his most blessed company may be made complete, do you, dearly beloved, also strive to fulfil this his desire, receiving him with all devotion and love, which, by the most glorious intercession of the Virgin Mary, may the same Jesus Christ, her Son, vouchsafe to grant to you, who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth through endless ages. Amen.

Responsory

Above health and all beauty thou art beloved of the Lord and art worthy to be called the Queen of heaven: ✠ The choirs of the Angels, thy companions and fellow citizens, rejoice.

℣. It behoves us to honour greatly so holy and spotless a Maiden.

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[1] As regards the Angels, these words must be taken in a slightly metaphorical sense.

THE PRAYERS OF ST BRIDGET OF SWEDEN

WHILST the blessed Bridget continually asked and besought God that he would teach her a more excellent manner of prayer, it happened one day that whilst she was at prayer her spirit experienced a sublime uplifting. Then she was taught certain beautiful prayers about the life, the passion and the glory of Christ, and about the life, compassion and glory of the most Blessed Virgin Mary. These prayers became so fixed in her memory that she was able to say them daily ever after. One day the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to her during her prayer and told her: " I have obtained these prayers for thee, hence as often as thou shalt read them, my Son shall visit thee with his consolation."

THE FIRST PRAYER

In this prayer, which was revealed by God to the blessed Bridget, devout and beautiful praises are bestowed on the glorious Virgin Mary for her holy Conception and infancy, and for the virtuous acts, labours and great sorrows of her whole life and for her most holy death and Assumption.

BE thou blessed and honoured, O my Lady, Virgin Mary, most holy Mother of God, whose most excellent creature thou art. None has ever loved him so tenderly as thou, O glorious Lady. Glory be to thee, my Lady, Virgin Mary, Mother of God, for the same Angel who announced the birth of Christ unto thee also declared thy nativity to thy father and mother, of whose most holy union thou wast conceived and born.

Blessed be thou, my Lady, Virgin Mary, who in thy most holy infancy, as soon as thy babyhood was spent, wast taken to the temple of God by thy parents, and together with other maidens wast entrusted to the keeping of a devout Pontiff.

Praise be to thee, my Lady, Virgin Mary, who, as soon as thou didst arrive at the age when thou couldst understand that God was thy Maker, didst at once begin to love him above all things. Then didst thou set apart, with great discernment, the hours both of the day and the night, for various exercises and practices to the honour of God. As for the sleep and food which thou didst allow to thy most holy body, they were so moderated that thou wast always ready for the service of God.

Endless glory be to thee, my Lady, Virgin Mary, for having vowed thy virginity to God. Hence thou didst not seek a human spouse, for well didst thou know that he to whom thou didst first plight thy troth excelled all others.

Be thou blessed, O my Lady, Virgin Mary, for that thou wast found all alone, inflamed with love for God, with all the energies of thy mind concentrated upon a most sublime contemplation of him to whom thou hadst consecrated thy virginity, at the time when an Angel was sent to thee and in his greeting made known to thee what was the will of God. In thy most humble reply thou didst declare thyself the handmaid of the Lord. In that moment the Holy Ghost filled thee most wondrously with all manner of virtues. God the Father sent unto thee his co-eternal and co-equal Son, who then took unto himself a human body from thy flesh and blood. Thus did the Son of God, in that

blessed hour, become thy Son, true man yet without loss to his divine majesty.

Be thou blessed, O my Lady, Virgin Mary, who didst feel the body of thy Son, which was formed of thine own body, live and grow within thy womb, until the time came of his glorious nativity, and before all others didst thou touch him with thy sacred hands, wrap him in swaddling clothes, and according to the saying of the prophet lay him in a manger and feed him with true maternal love and joy.

Glory be to thee, O my Lady, Virgin Mary, who didst dwell in a lowly house, that is, in a stable, and yet didst behold great Kings coming from afar to see thy Son and offer unto him royal gifts with the utmost reverence. Later on thou didst present him in the temple with thine own precious hands, and in thy blessed heart didst thou diligently treasure up all that was said of him, or which thou didst witness in him, during the days of his infancy.

Be thou blessed, O my Lady, Virgin Mary, who with this most holy Child didst flee into Egypt and later on return to Nazareth; who, when thy Son waxed and grew in body, didst behold him humbly subject to thee and to Joseph.

Blessed be thou, O Lady, Virgin Mary, when thou didst behold thy Son preaching, working miracles and calling his Apostles. Illumined by his examples, miracles and teaching, these became the witnesses to the truth, making known to all nations that Jesus is truly thy Son and the Son of God and that he accomplished in his own person the oracles of the prophets, when for the sake of mankind he patiently endured a most bitter death.

Be thou blessed, O my Lady, Virgin Mary, who didst know beforehand that thy Son would be seized by his enemies. Afterwards thine own most blessed eyes sorrowfully beheld him bound, scourged, crowned with thorns, nailed to the cross and the object of the contempt of many who called him a traitor. Honour be unto thee, O my Lady, Virgin Mary, who with great sorrow didst behold thy Son speaking to thee from the cross, and with thy blessed ears didst hear him cry in his agony to his heavenly Father and commend his spirit into his hands. Praise be to thee, O my Lady, Virgin Mary, who in bitter anguish didst contemplate thy Son hanging on the cross, bruised from the top of the head to the sole of his feet, dyed in his own blood and expiring amid the most cruel torments. With great grief thou didst behold his hands and feet and sacred side pierced and his skin torn without pity.

Be thou blessed, O my Lady, Virgin Mary, who with tearful eyes didst behold thy Son taken down from the cross, wrapped in a winding sheet, buried in the sepulchre and there guarded by soldiers. Be thou blessed, O my Lady, Virgin Mary, whose heart was most cruelly torn when thou wast at last compelled to leave the sepulchre of thy Son, when his friends led thee into the house of John. But then thou didst immediately experience great comfort in thy sorrow, for thou didst most assuredly foreknow that thy Son would soon rise again.

Rejoice, most noble Lady, Virgin Mary, for in that same instant when thy Son rose from the dead, he wished it to be made known to thee, his most blessed Mother; for all at once he appeared to thee in his own person. After that he who in his living body had undergone

death proved to other persons that he was indeed risen from the dead. Rejoice therefore, O most noble Lady, Virgin Mary, in that thou didst behold thy Son risen from the dead and crowned with a victor's diadem after he had overcome death, defeated its author and opened the gate of heaven. Moreover, on the fortieth day after his resurrection, thou didst behold him, together with many witnesses, ascending into his heavenly kingdom, surrounded by Angels who paid homage unto him as unto their King.

Rejoice, O most noble Lady, Virgin Mary, because thou didst merit to behold how, after his ascension, thy Son suddenly poured out upon his Apostles and disciples that same Holy Spirit of which thou didst already possess the fulness. Then did the Holy Ghost increase the fervour of their charity and so wonderfully enlighten their hearts as to make them understand aright the truth of the Catholic faith.

Rejoice moreover, most noble Lady, Virgin Mary, and let the whole world have part in thy joy, in that thy Son, after his ascension, allowed thee to remain upon earth for the space of many years, that thou mightest comfort his friends and strengthen their faith, help the weak and give counsel to the Apostles. During that time, by the prudence of thy words and the perfection of thy conduct and virtuous life, thou didst convert an immense number of Jews and infidels to the Catholic faith. Then were they wondrously enlightened by thy Son, so that they confessed thee to be his Virgin Mother, and him true God and true man.

Be thou blessed, O Lady, Virgin Mary, who, because of thy burning charity and maternal love, didst unceasingly and at all times desire to rejoin thy Son already

enthroned in heaven. But though thou didst always yearn for heaven during thy sojourn on earth, yet didst thou humbly conform to the divine will, by reason whereof divine justice most wonderfully increased thy eternal glory. Everlasting honour and glory be unto thee, O my Lady, Virgin Mary, for when it at last pleased God to take thee out of this exile and to bestow eternal glory upon thy soul, in his kingdom, he deigned to make this known to thee through the ministry of an Angel. He also ordained that his Apostles should lay thy dead body in the sepulchre with all the reverence due to it. Rejoice, O my Lady, Virgin Mary, for the power of God embraced thy soul in the hour of thy blessed death, and his fatherly care preserved it from all harm. Then did God the Father make all creation subject to thee; the Son also made thee, his blessed Mother, sit with him upon a throne of glory, and the Holy Ghost gave unto thee, his bride, a share in his own kingly domain.

Rejoice eternally, my Lady, Virgin Mary, for after thy dead body had rested for a few days in the grave, the power of God speedily reunited it to thy soul with great glory. Rejoice exceedingly, Mother of God, glorious Lady, Virgin Mary, in that thou wast taken up to heaven with thy soul and body, escorted by the Angels Then didst thou behold thy Son in his glorified Humanity, understanding at the same time, with utmost transport of joy, that he is indeed the most just judge of all and the rewarder of good works.

Rejoice, O Lady, Virgin Mary, in that, in the glory of heaven, thou knowest thyself to be both a Mother and a Maiden, free from every stain of sin, nay, adorned with so many actions done out of purest love that thou

fully understandest that God's justice owes thee the very highest honour. Then didst thou also understand that whosoever shall have loved God most ardently in this world shall have his place nearest to him in heaven. But it was manifest to the whole heavenly court that neither Angel nor man would ever equal thy charity towards God, whence it was meet and just that God himself should place thee in soul and body upon the highest throne of glory.

Be thou blessed, O my Lady, Virgin Mary, in that every faithful soul praises the Holy Trinity because thou art its noblest creation, an ever ready intercessor on behalf of souls in need and the advocate and most trusted protectress of all sinners. Praise, therefore, be to God the Sovereign Emperor and Lord, who has so exalted thee that thou also art Empress and Lady in the everlasting kingdom, reigning with him, world without end. Amen.

THE SECOND PRAYER

This prayer was revealed by God to St Bridget. In it beautiful and devout praises are bestowed upon Christ for his glorious Incarnation and all the actions, labours and sorrows of his life and for his most holy death and for his Ascension into heaven and the Mission of the Holy Ghost.

Be thou blessed, O Lord my God, Lover of my soul, who art one God in three persons. Glory and praise be to thee, my Lord Jesus Christ, who wast sent by the Father into the womb of a Virgin the while thou always remainedst with the Father in heaven, and the Father with his Godhead remained inseparably with thee upon earth. Honour and glory be thine, my Lord Jesus

Christ, who after thou wast conceived of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin, didst there grow and humbly dwell until the fulness of her time, and after thy joyful nativity didst deign to be handled by the most pure hands of this thy Mother, to be wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger.

Be thou blessed, O my Lord Jesus Christ, who hast willed that thy spotless flesh should be circumcised, that thou shouldst be called Jesus, and shouldst be offered in the temple by thy Mother.

Be thou blessed, O my Lord Jesus Christ, who didst will to be baptized in the Jordan by thy servant John.

Be thou blessed, O my Lord Jesus Christ, who with thy blessed lips didst preach to men the words of life, and in thine own person didst work many miracles in their presence. Be thou blessed, O my Lord Jesus Christ, who by fulfilling the prophetic Scriptures, didst manifest thyself to the world as true God. Be thou blessed and glorified, O my Lord Jesus Christ, for thy wonderful fast of forty days in the desert, and for allowing the enemy, the devil, to tempt thee, whom, when it pleased thee, thou didst drive away with one word.

Be thou blessed, O my Lord Jesus Christ, who didst predict thy death before the time, and at the Last Supper didst wondrously change material bread into thy most precious body, and most lovingly gavest it as a memorial of thy most sacred Passion to thine Apostles, and when thou didst wash their feet with thy precious and sacred hands, gavest unto us an example of deepest humility.

Honour be to thee, O my Lord Jesus Christ, who in the fear of thy Passion and Death didst sweat from thine innocent body drops of blood and yet didst accomplish

with all thy heart the work of our redemption which thou camest to do, and so didst give a signal proof of the love that thou bearest towards mankind. Glory be to thee, O my Lord Jesus Christ, who wast sold by thy disciple, bought by the Jews, made a prisoner, and yet didst prostrate thine enemies with one word, into whose impure and greedy hands thou didst nevertheless willingly surrender thyself.

Be thou blessed, O my Lord Jesus Christ, for that thou wast led to Caiphas, and that, though thou art the judge of all, thou didst meekly permit men to drag thee before the tribunal of Pilate. Be thou blessed, O my Lord Jesus Christ, for permitting that Pilate should send thee to Herod to be mocked and derided by him, and to be sent back once more to the said Pilate. Be thou glorified, O my Lord Jesus Christ, for the derision to which thou wast subjected when thou stoodest before all, covered with a purple cloak and crowned with a wreath of piercing thorns, and for enduring it with the utmost patience when they spat upon thy glorious face and covered thine eyes with a veil and when their sacrilegious hands struck thee upon thy cheek and neck. Praise be to thee, O my Lord Jesus Christ, who like an innocent lamb didst most patiently endure to be bound to a pillar, to be scourged, then to be again led before Pilate's tribunal dyed in thine own blood. Blessed be thou, O my Lord Jesus Christ, whose blessed ears most patiently listened to the outrages and falsehoods which they proffered against thee when thou stoodest before the tribunal of Pilate, and to the shouts of the populace when they asked for the freedom of a robber and for thy condemnation.

Honour be unto thee, O my Lord Jesus Christ, who,

after thy whole glorious body had been dyed in thy blood, wast condemned to die upon a cross, didst painfully bear thy cross upon thy sacred shoulders, wast driven by an infuriated crowd to the place of suffering, wast there stripped of thy garments and in that state didst will to be nailed to the wood of the cross. Endless glory be unto thee, O my Lord Jesus Christ, because for love of us thou didst meekly endure that the Jews should stretch thy sacred hands and feet by means of a rope, cruelly nail them to the wood of the cross with iron nails, call thee a traitor, and heap insults upon thee, both in the sacrilegious inscription which they fixed on the cross and by their manifold blasphemies.

Everlasting praise and gratitude be thine, O my Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sakes didst so meekly endure such cruel torments. For upon the cross all strength forsook thy blessed body, thy gentle eyes became dimmed, thy beautiful face, owing to the loss of blood, became all pale, thy blessed tongue became parched, thy mouth could not retain the bitter drink they offered thee, the hair of thy head and thy beard were wet from the blood that flowed from the wounds of thy sacred head, the bones of thy hands and feet and thy whole precious body became dislocated, not without intense pain, and the veins and sinews of thy blessed body were torn. With such inhumanity did they scourge thee and bruise thee that the skin of thy entire most innocent body was rent. In this state of suffering and torment didst thou, O my most sweet Lord, hang upon the cross, in great meekness and humility, awaiting the hour of death.

Everlasting glory be thine, O Lord Jesus Christ, for when thou wast in such agony thou didst most meekly

fix thy gentle eyes upon thy most august Mother, who never did sin or give consent to the least sin, and in order to console her, didst entrust her to the keeping of thy disciple.

Be thou blessed for evermore, my Lord Jesus Christ, who in thine own death agony didst hold out hope to all sinners when thou didst mercifully promise the glory of paradise to the penitent thief.

Everlasting praise be unto thee, O my Lord Jesus Christ, for every one of those hours during which thou didst endure upon the cross for us sinners the most bitter anguish. For the burning pain of thy wounds penetrated into thy blessed soul, cruelly piercing thy most Sacred Heart, until the moment when thy Heart broke and thou didst give up the ghost, most meekly and with bowed head commending it into the hands of God thy Father. In that moment the chill of death numbed thy sacred body.

Be thou blessed, O my Lord Jesus Christ, who didst redeem our souls by thy precious blood and most holy death, mercifully recalling us from exile and opening unto us the gate of life everlasting.

Be thou blessed, O my Lord Jesus Christ, who for our salvation didst allow thy side and Heart to be pierced with a lance, so that thy most precious blood, together with water, might flow from it in a plentiful stream for our redemption. Nor didst thou permit thy most sacred body to be taken down from the cross before the judge gave leave. Glory be unto thee, O my Lord Jesus Christ, because thou didst will that thy blessed body should be taken down from the cross by thy friends and by them laid in the arms of thy most sorrowful Mother, and by her wrapped in a winding sheet to be

buried in a sepulchre where thou didst permit it to lie whilst it was being watched by a military guard.

Everlasting honour be thine, O my Lord Jesus Christ, who didst rise from the dead upon the third day and show thyself alive, to whomsoever it pleased thee, and after forty days didst ascend into heaven, in the presence of many witnesses. Then didst thou place in glory those of thy friends whom thou hadst delivered from limbo.

Joyful praise be unto thee for evermore, O my Lord Jesus Christ, who didst pour forth thy Holy Spirit in the hearts of thy disciples, thereby wondrously increasing their love of God.

Be thou blessed, and praised, and glorified for ever, O my Lord Jesus, who art enthroned in thy heavenly kingdom, in the glory of thy Godhead and with the fulness of that most sacred Humanity which thou didst take from the most pure blood of the Virgin. Even so shalt thou come in the day of judgement to judge the souls of the living and the dead; who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, world without end. Amen.

THE THIRD PRAYER

In this prayer, which was revealed by God to the blessed Bridget, praise is given to all the members of the most holy body of our Lord Jesus Christ and to the most virtuous acts of these same members.

O MY Lord Jesus Christ, well do I know that thy blessed body is unceasingly praised and glorified by the jubilant harmonies of the citizens of heaven. But because I owe to thee everlasting gratitude, though I

be but an ignorant and unworthy person, I desire to give with my whole heart and voice all the praise and honour that I can give to every member of thy precious body.

O my Lord Jesus Christ, our true high priest, thou didst change material bread into thy blessed body, in order that thou mightest thus feed us with the bread of Angels. Wherefore let thy glorious priestly throne be at the right hand of the Father, in the majesty of thy blessed and everlasting Godhead. Amen.

O my Lord Jesus Christ, thou art of a truth the head of all men and Angels, the true King of kings and Lord of lords, whose works all spring from thy sincere and unspeakable love. And since thou didst humbly permit thy head to be crowned with a crown of thorns, may thy head and the hairs of thy head be blessed and adorned with a resplendent imperial crown, and may the earth, and the sea, and all creation be for ever subject to thee and to the power of thy will. Amen.

O my Lord Jesus Christ, inasmuch as thy resplendent forehead never turned away from righteousness and truth, all creatures shall for ever render unto it that glory which becomes a triumphant king. Amen.

O my Lord Jesus Christ, whose bright eyes mercifully look upon those who implore thy benevolence with sincere charity, may the entire host of the citizens of heaven praise thine eyes and thy most amiable and beautiful countenance. Amen.

O my Lord Jesus Christ, the ears of thy kindness are for ever ready to listen to the prayers of those who humbly present their requests to thee; wherefore may they be blessed and honoured for ever. Amen.

O my Lord Jesus Christ, inasmuch as thy blessed

nostrils did not shrink from the odour of the tomb of Lazarus, nor from the repulsive kiss of the traitor Judas, may these precious nostrils of thine be blessed for ever by all creatures, and may their praise be an odour of sweetness unto them. Amen.

O my Lord Jesus Christ, who with thy blessed mouth and lips didst frequently preach the words of life for our instruction and for our corporal and spiritual well-being; may thy venerable mouth and lips be blessed for every word that proceeded from them. Amen.

O my Lord Jesus Christ, may all creatures bless those teeth of thine with which thou didst eat that food which was necessary for the sustenance of thy blessed body. Amen.

O my Lord Jesus Christ, blessed be thy tongue, forasmuch as it either spoke or was silent according as it was meet and useful and in accordance with the plans of thy Godhead. Amen.

O my Lord Jesus Christ, blessed be likewise all those sacred members and inner organs which, each in their own way, sustained that precious body of thine which is our redemption and the joy of the Angels. Amen.

O my Lord Jesus Christ, thou art truly called our leader, for thou didst bear the heavy weight of the cross upon thy sacred neck and shoulders, before thou didst mightily overcome the gates of hell and lead the souls of the elect into heaven. Wherefore everlasting honour and glory be upon thy neck and shoulders which have borne so heavy a weight. Amen.

O my Lord Jesus Christ, thy Sacred Heart, which is truly royal in its magnificent generosity, was never diverted, either by tortures or by flatteries, from defending the kingdom of thy truth and righteousness;

neither didst thou spare thy most precious blood, but didst fight with a generous heart for justice and the law, and didst declare the commandments of the law and the counsels of perfection both to thy friends and to thy enemies. For the defence of these thou gavest thy life, and the hour of death was the moment of thy victory. Hence it is just that thine invincible Heart be praised for evermore by all those that dwell upon the earth and by all the hosts of heaven. Amen.

O my Lord Jesus Christ, the soldiers and faithful servants of the lords of this world willingly expose their lives in battle so that the life of their masters may be safe; but thou, O kind Lord, didst hasten to the death of the cross lest thy servants perish miserably. Wherefore it is just that thy glorious and intrepid Heart be eternally adored by the servants whom thou hast redeemed in such wise, and that it be likewise humbly praised by the choirs of the Angels. Amen.

O my Lord Jesus Christ, although the might of thy hands and arms exceeds the might of Samson, thou didst patiently allow them to be nailed to the cross, in order thus to wrest thy friends from the power of hell; wherefore may these same members be the objects of the unceasing homage and everlasting praise of those whom thou didst redeem in such wise. Amen.

O my Lord Jesus Christ, honour and glory be unto all thy sacred limbs from all those who are pressed down by bodily or spiritual toil, because from thine infancy thou didst labour for us and didst bear the burden of our sins. Amen.

O my Lord Jesus Christ, praise be unto thy sovereign purity: be it exalted above the purity of the Angels in heaven, and above the purity of men on earth who have

observed chastity and virginity, for the chastity and virginity of none can be compared to thy purity. Amen.

O my Lord Jesus Christ, let all the inhabitants of heaven praise thee, as well as all those who on earth bend the knee out of reverence for their superiors, for thou, the Lord of all, didst bend thy sacred knees before thy disciples. Amen.

O my Lord Jesus Christ, kind Master, may thy blessed feet be for ever blessed and adored, for with bare feet didst thou tread a path more rugged than any thou hast pointed out to thy disciples, and in the end thou didst permit them to be fixed to the cross with cruel nails; who livest and reignest with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, world without end. Amen.

THE FOURTH PRAYER

In this prayer, which was revealed to the blessed Bridget, most devout and beautiful praises are bestowed upon all the members of the glorious body of the Virgin Mary and upon all their virtuous acts.

O my Lady, my life, Queen of heaven, Mother of God; although I know for certain that thy glorious body is unceasingly praised with joyful hymns by the whole court of heaven, none the less, even though I be most unworthy to do so, I yet long with all my heart to give on earth what praise and thanksgiving I am able to bestow upon the precious members of thy body.

Wherefore, O my Lady, Virgin Mary, blessed be thy hair which is adorned with a diadem of glory and is resplendent above the brightness of the sun. For even as the hairs of the head cannot be counted so are thy virtues beyond reckoning.

O my Lady, Virgin Mary, praised be thy forehead and thy face, the fairness whereof exceeds that of the moon, so that none of the faithful could look upon thee in this world without experiencing the spiritual consolation that flowed into his heart from such a contemplation.

Blessed be thy most pure eyes, O my Lady, Virgin Mary, for they never desired any of the transitory things that they beheld in this world, and whenever thou didst raise thine eyes, the whole court of heaven deemed them brighter than the stars of the firmament.

O my Lady, Virgin Mary, praised be thy tongue, more pleasing to God and his Angels than all the fruit-bearing trees of the world, for every word spoken by thy tongue never hurt anyone but was always of advantage to some person. For thy tongue was guided by prudence, and its sound was sweeter to the ears of the listeners than the sweetest of fruits could be to the palate.

O my Queen and Lady, Virgin Mary, blessed be thy mouth and thy lips, more pleasing than roses and all other flowers, especially because of that most humble word of thine which thy blessed mouth uttered in answering the Angel of God, when God was about to accomplish through thee his will which he had made known by the mouth of the prophets. By this thine answer thou didst diminish the power of the devils in hell and gloriously complete the ranks of the Angels in heaven.

O my Lady, my power and my strength, blessed be thy most sacred arms, hands and fingers. May they be eternally honoured, above all precious stones which may be compared to thy virtuous actions, for even as these holy actions of thine attracted to thee the Son of God,

so did thy arms and hands embrace him with maternal love.

O my Lady, joy of my heart, Virgin Mary, honour and glory be unto thy most noble heart which burned with love for God's honour above all creatures in heaven and in earth, so that the flame of its charity ascended into the heights of heaven even to the throne of God the Father, for which cause his Son became incarnate in thy womb, by the operation of the Holy Spirit of love.

O my Lady, Virgin most prudent, blessed be for ever thy most sacred feet, Oh! how beautiful were thy steps! Oh! verily every one of them gave joy to the King of heaven and his whole court!

O my Lady, Virgin Mary, Mother of us all, may the incomprehensible Majesty of God the Father, together with the Son and the Holy Ghost, be eternally praised because of the most sacred cell of thy body in which the Son of God found most sweet repose, whom the entire Angelic host praises in heaven and the whole Church humbly worships upon earth.

O my Lord, my King and my God, eternal honour, endless praise, blessing and glory with infinite thanksgiving be unto thee who didst create this most noble Virgin to be thy Mother, and for all the joy and comfort that she procured for those who are in heaven and on earth, and for the help and consolation that she obtained for the souls in purgatory; who livest and reignest with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

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TITLE Revelations and Prayers.

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